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AMERICA'S LEGAL MARIJUANA BUSINESS**

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AND
DEATH
IN
SYRIA**

DISPATCHES FROM AN URBAN INFERNO





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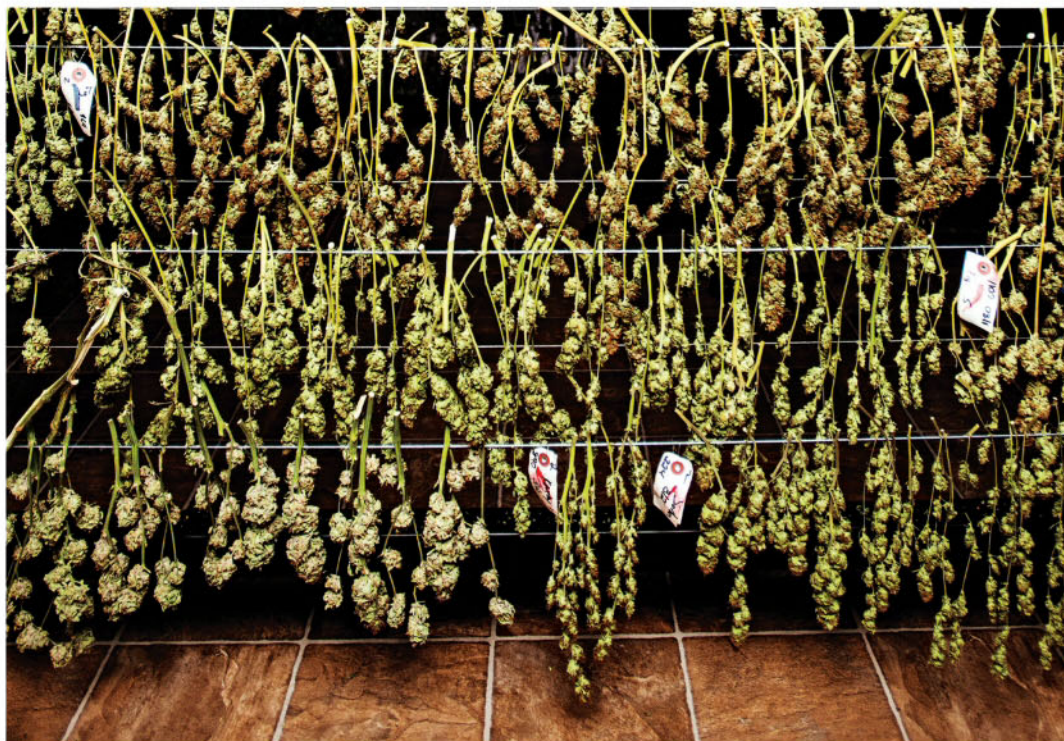
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jim Impoco

DEPUTY EDITOR

Bob Roe

MANAGING EDITOR

Kira Bindrim

EUROPEAN EDITOR

Matt McAllester

CONTRIBUTING DESIGN DIRECTOR

Priest + Grace

CO-FOUNDER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Etienne Uzac

CO-FOUNDER, CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

Johnathan Davis

MANAGING DIRECTOR, EMEA

Dev Pragad

EUROPEAN EDITION

EDITORIAL

NEWS EDITOR

Barney Guiton

DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

Lucy Draper

REPORTERS

Damien Sharkov

Elisabeth Braw

Felicity Capon

Jack Moore

Conor Gaffey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS

Robert Chalmers

Adam LeBor

Rory Ross

Rudolph Herzog

Graham Boynton

Nick Foulkes

Alice Hart Davis

Harry Eyres

ART + PHOTO

ART DIRECTOR

Michael Friel

DESIGNER

Jessica Fitzgerald

PHOTO DIRECTOR

Shaminder Dulai

PHOTO EDITOR

Jared T. Miller

CONTRIBUTING PHOTO EDITOR

Tara Pixley

CONTRIBUTING PRODUCTION MANAGER

Helen J. Russell

CONTRIBUTING DIGITAL IMAGING SPECIALIST

Katy Lyness

CONTRIBUTING DIGITAL DESIGNERS

Tuomas Korpijaakko

Robert Dominguez

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Victoria Bekiempis

Jessica Firger

Leah McGrath Goodman

Michele Richinick

Lauren Walker

Jonathan Broder

Abigail Jones

Paula Mejia

Winston Ross

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Janine Di Giovanni

Gogo Lidz

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Taylor Wofford

Kurt Eichenwald

Douglas Main

Bill Powell

Jeff Stein

Stav Ziv

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Claudia Parsons

R.M. Schneiderman

Cady Drell

Jackie Bischof

Elijah Wolfson

Matt Cooper

Grant Burningham

John Seeley

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ADVERTISING

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PRESIDENT ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI AND PRIME MINISTER IBRAHIM MAHLAB TALK ABOUT SOME OF EGYPT'S MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

A more secure future for Egypt

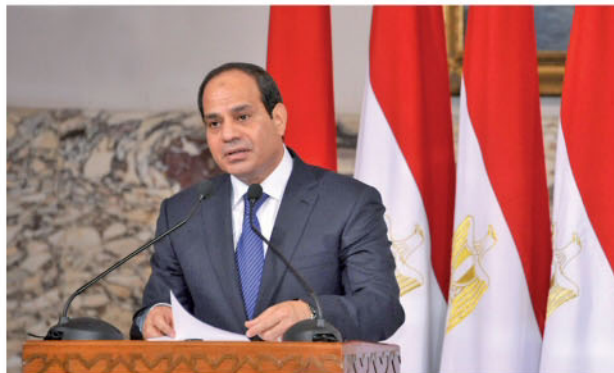
After just one year in office, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is returning the country to stability and prosperity

Regional security

Egypt is at the forefront of a struggle with extremist groups [that] not only threaten us, but menace the region and the world. We need a coordinated effort by the international community to overcome this challenge. [We] should adopt a more holistic approach, including economic, social, and cultural dimensions, to confront this. Attempts to destroy the determination of the Egyptian people to build a peaceful, prosperous future will not only fail, but strengthen our resolve. Egypt is a fundamental pillar of security in the region. [Our] stability is an essential factor, playing a crucial political, cultural and religious role in extremely difficult conditions.

Plans for WEF

Davos [in 2015] provided a good opportunity to outline Egypt's positions and portray the realities on the ground. We look forward to hosting next year's WEF Middle East and North African Forum in Sharm El Sheikh. It is a critical forum to exchange views with world leaders and harness support on political and economic fronts. It provides an excellent opportunity to showcase reforms and initiatives implemented to improve the business environment and attract new investment, as well as the opportunities available... in our "Egypt 2030 vision". This roadmap is a medium- to long-term strategy geared toward creating a modern, open, democratic, and



productive society. We've set ambitious but achievable goals to transform this vision into reality.

Major projects

The Egyptian Economic Development Conference [in March 2015] was an opportunity to showcase the new era [we] have embarked upon, based on a recommitment toward partnership with the private sector. Twenty agreements were signed, valued at \$66.4 billion. Energy is critical to developmental endeavors, to

"We are at the beginning of a journey and there is much more to do" President el-Sisi

satisfy the needs of the people and meet industrial demand. Among the most significant projects was a \$9 billion contract with Siemens to build power stations with a capacity of 14.4 GW. This will increase [our] energy supply by 50 per cent. [Another] key project is the Suez Canal Development Project, completed in record time

in just one year. Enlarging this strategic waterway will advance Egypt's economy, increase capacity by allowing two-way traffic, reduce waiting and transit time, and create new jobs. The Suez Canal Authority estimates annual transit revenues for Egypt will almost triple, from \$5 billion currently to \$13.2 billion by 2023.

Egypt's advantages

Egypt offers the world's second highest rate of return on investment and is one of the largest markets in the Middle East and Africa. Situated at the nexus of Africa, Asia and Europe, Egypt serves as a strategic gateway to these markets. We have free-trade agreements that effectively expand Egypt's market size to 1.6 billion, including the Tripartite Free Trade Area with 26 African nations that will liberalize trade between Cairo and the Cape of Good Hope, unlocking trade benefits for the world. Today, Egypt is at a turning point in its history that is creating new and dynamic opportunities for all investors.

"We are implementing reforms to re-establish Egypt as a leading economic power," Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab

Growth prospects

Many international companies and organizations have expressed an exceedingly positive outlook for growth in the second quarter of 2015, as economic growth is projected to almost double to 4% in fiscal year 2015, and the deficit expected to decline to 8.9% of GDP in FY15, compared to 10.8% in FY14, and 14% in FY13. The reception of the dollar bond the government recently issued serves as a useful measure of investor confidence in the government of Egypt and the economic direction in which it is taking the country.

Promising sectors

The EEDC signaled an interest in Egypt's investment opportunities. There are many sectors [we have] targeted to attract investments, such as ICT, as the government is seeking to expand



infrastructure, and the oil and gas sector, aimed at accelerating production from existing fields and incentivising exploration and development. There was a very strong vote of confidence by the international community and the signing of agreements at the conference is just a first step in a long process leading to the creation of new projects.





BIG SHOTS

CHINA

Bruised Car Lot

Tianjin, China—
Burned-out cars and overturned shipping containers smolder after two massive explosions in a warehouse containing illegally stored hazardous chemicals ripped through a major port on August 12. The blasts killed at least 114 people and injured around 700 others, according to official Chinese media reports. The disaster is shaping up to be one of China's worst industrial catastrophes in recent memory, provoking fears of acid rain and chemical pollution.



NG HAN GUAN



BIG
SHOTS



CUBA

Seal of Approval

Havana—Employees carry the United States seal out of the embassy on August 14 so it could be hung on the outside of the building. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visited the city hours later to commemorate the embassy's opening by raising the American flag, after it had been shuttered for 54 years.



CHIP SOMODEVILLA

GREECE

**Political
Football**

Kos, Greece—Migrants are corralled on August 12 into a stadium for registration with the government, without food, drinking water or sanitation. About 1,000 people were seeking asylum. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has criticized Greek authorities for not taking control of the humanitarian crisis. Nearly 124,000 people have landed on the country's shores by sea this year, and most are living in "totally inadequate" conditions, the U.N. office says.



YORGOS KARAHALIS







RUSSIA

Day for Knight

Alabino, Russia—Participants dressed as Old Russian knights and Russian paratroopers take part in the opening ceremony of the inaugural International Army Games on August 1. Moscow created the games, a kind of Olympics for military prowess, to flex its military might and show off weapons it hopes to sell to neighboring nations such as India, Pakistan and China. Sixteen non-NATO nations were invited to compete in 13 events, including a tank biathlon and aerial bombing runs.



MAXIM SHEMETOV



P A G E O N E

ISRAEL

CORRUPTION

CLIMATE

MEXICO

RUSSIA

ALBANIA

CLEANING HOUSE?

Child abuse survivors don't trust the independence of U.K. officials behind new probe

AFTER YEARS of horrifying revelations about sexual abuse of children by people of power and influence, Britain called in a judge from New Zealand in a bid to guarantee the independence of a new inquiry into what appears to have been a massive institutional cover-up for decades.

In an opening statement July 9, Judge Lowell Goddard said she will lead a team that will investigate thousands of allegations of abuse perpetrated by “people of prominence in public life.” Cases involve both present and former high-ranking officials in central government, MI5 intelligence and security services, the Metropolitan Police Service’s Special Branch and the state-owned BBC.

The department that oversees many of those authorities is the Home Office, a catchall ministry that is one of Britain’s most potent institutions, in charge of immigration, police, domestic security and MI5. So when survivors like Andrew Lavery, who was abused in his early teens at the hands of

Benedictine monks, learned that dozens of Home Office staff were being seconded for the inquiry, he was stunned. “How can the Home Office investigate themselves?” he asks. “It’s toxic.”

The Home Office is at the center of some of the most egregious allegations the inquiry will be investigating, including accusations that Leon Brittan, who was home secretary in the 1980s and died in January, was an abuser.

In late July, it emerged that the Home Office failed to turn over documents to an inquiry in 2014 that sought to determine whether the office deliberately “lost” key evidence that might have resulted in the apprehension of accused child abusers working in the highest echelons of government, including Brittan. Among the documents reportedly lost was a list handed to Brittan in the early 1980s, while he was still home secretary, by a member of Parliament. The list named suspected child abusers in positions of influence and power, including members of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s Cabinet.

BY
**LEAH MCGRATH
GOODMAN**
[@truth_eater](#)



OLI SCARFF/AFP/GETTY

+
**GENERATION
ABUSED:** When
Lowell Goddard
launched a new
independent
inquiry in July, she
noted that reports
indicate as many
as 1 in 20 British
children may have
been abused in
recent decades.

The Home Office subsequently destroyed the list, along with more than 100 other files relating to child sex abuse, according to the 2014 review. The review was unable to determine what Brittan did with the files or if the destruction of them was deliberate.

In July, the files the Home Office failed to turn over to the 2014 review were made public, including documents about an unnamed “MI5 officer convicted of sex offenses.” According to the 2014 inquiry reviewers, Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam, the documents give rare insight into the attitude of MI5 and the Home Office when it came to suspected pedophiles operating inside the government. As a case in point, they released an excerpt of a memo from former MI5 Director-General Sir Antony Duff to then-Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong from 1986.

In it, Duff warns Armstrong about a member of Parliament with a “penchant for small boys,” but adds that he’s satisfied with the politician’s denial. “At the present stage...the risks of political embarrassment to the government is rather greater than the security danger,” he says.

Both Duff and the man he was talking about—Thatcher aide and Deputy Conservative Party Chairman Peter Morrison—are now deceased. Armstrong (now Lord Armstrong) has denied any recollection of the memo.

Newsweek has also confirmed that the private papers detailing the minutes of home secretary meetings from 1978 to 1984—key periods of the abuse allegations—are missing from the U.K.’s National Archives, the official document repository of the British government. Officials at the archive say the documents should have been declassified by 2004 (after 20 years), and they are not sure why the papers have not yet been released. The Home Office has not responded to inquiries regarding their whereabouts.

In light of the Home Office’s track record, Andrew Kershaw, another survivor of abuse, says he feels deeply uneasy about it having any role in the child abuse inquiry. In an email to *Newsweek*, he writes, “It was very clear that the Home Office was keen to keep their department and its employees from being investigated by this inquiry. The original terms [of the probe] were drafted to exclude the Home Office from ever being investigated.” That changed, he says, only after public protest.

A third abuse survivor and activist, Phil Framp-ton, says the Home Office ignored survivors’



“THE RISKS OF POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT IS RATHER GREATER THAN THE SECURITY DANGER.”

objections to its hands-on approach to what it was publicly billing as an “independent” inquiry. “It is greatly troubling that an inquiry that inevitably will be forced to look at the failings or otherwise of the Home Office has been set up by and is being run by Home Office employees and career civil servants,” he says.

Newsweek learned that as of August, 24 of the inquiry’s permanent staff members (out of a total of 70) were seconded from the Home

TROUBLE AT HOME:
The late Brittan, who was home secretary in the 1980s, is one of several politicians who have been accused of abusing children.

Office, and those people were appointed to some of the inquiry's most sensitive senior roles, including those handling highly delicate matters with abuse survivors.

Newsweek also confirmed that an additional 40 of the inquiry's staffers previously held positions in the British government, after cross-referencing with multiple databases, including the office of Britain's attorney general, which has been accused of not prosecuting prominent accused abusers. The inquiry declined to provide *Newsweek* with a full list of which departments had seconded staff and how many staff came from each department. Some of the departments, it said, included the Department of Health, the Department for Work and Pensions and the National Archives.

John O'Brien, for example, was formerly head of safeguarding for vulnerable children and adults at the Home Office. He has been employed as head secretariat to the inquiry and personally "recruited the core administrative and support staff," as well as "managed all of the essential preparatory work over the past three months," according to Goddard, who approved the senior appointment. O'Brien declined to comment through a representative, as did Goddard.

Those who moved from the employ of the Home Office to the inquiry also include a team of Home Office staffers who previously worked under O'Brien, such as Usha Choli, appointed head of engagement and stakeholder relations for the inquiry, as well as Cheryl Mendes and Helen Griffiths, who worked in administrative roles under O'Brien at the Home Office and continue to do so with the inquiry.

The survivors say that until more is known about the Home Office's role in the scandal, they are particularly sensitive to any long-serving Home Office staff joining the inquiry, as they fear that even staff members not accused of any wrongdoing may be more inclined to hold the Home Office's priorities above those of the abuse survivors. One staffer, Angela Kyle, the Home Office's director of strategic risk and analysis, was seconded to a leadership post within the inquiry, setting up operations and administration as head secretariat for the inquiry, until O'Brien took over that role. (She has since returned to the Home Office.) Kyle's career at the Home Office goes back to 1978, overlapping with Brittan's tenure. "When the survivors group met with the new inquiry team for the first time in April, we were shocked to see John O'Brien was running it, and all the people we'd previously met as the Home Office staff—down to O'Brien's secretary—moved over to run the inquiry with new job titles," Lavery says. "It

was all the same faces. It was repugnant."

Inquiry spokeswoman Charlotte Phillips—recruited from an office under the attorney general—says Goddard does not view the recruitment of the two dozen staffers from the Home Office, many of whom moved over before the judge's appointment this spring, as compromising to the independence of the inquiry. "Independence is at the heart of the inquiry, and this is protected by the independent decision making of the chair, panel and counsel," she tells *Newsweek*. She added that the inquiry plans to advertise outside the government to fill an additional 20 jobs.

In response to questions from *Newsweek*, the Home Office said in a statement it does not believe its shifting of staff to the inquiry created a conflict of interest. "The inquiry is completely independent and responsible for its own recruitment and staffing. Where the inquiry has chosen to take staff on secondment from government, those staff are not reporting to—and are acting entirely independently from—the Home Office and government."

As of late May, an estimated 1,433 alleged offenders, both alive and deceased, were being investigated for child abuse allegations, including 76 politicians, 43 people from the music industry and 135 from TV, film or radio.

At the launch of the inquiry, Goddard promised she would "not hesitate to make findings in relation to named individuals or institutions where the evidence justifies this." She emphasized that while the inquiry cannot impose criminal convictions or mete out punishments, at its core, it will use its statutory powers to investigate claims and engage in "the naming of people that have been responsible for the sexual abuse of children, or institutions that have been at fault in failing to protect children from abuse."

Lavery says he fears that Goddard will not be able to act in the best interests of abuse survivors if she doesn't ensure her team is more independent. "There is an appearance of being sincere and of listening, but in reality the government is still trying to control its interests over the interests of the survivors," he says. "We don't want to be treated with threat or favor. We are not asking for anything other than justice." ■





THE OTHER TWO-STATE SOLUTION

What's behind the surge in Israelis seeking EU citizenship?

LAST YEAR, Hadas Kedar dug through the drawers in her parents' apartment, looking for proof of her family's life in Hungary during the 1920s. Eventually, she found several birth certificates and elementary school diplomas, put them in a folder, then sketched out a family tree and brought the paperwork to the Hungarian Embassy in Tel Aviv. Like thousands of Israelis, Kedar, a 50-year-old artist, is hoping to acquire European citizenship. Yet her application is unique—and symbolic: She is related to Theodor Herzl, the Hungarian-born journalist who was the founding father of the Jewish state.

In July, not long before the country was set to commemorate the 111th anniversary of Herzl's death, I visited Kedar at her apartment, located near Herzl Street in central Tel Aviv. As we sat in her living room, overlooking the beach, Kedar showed me a highlighted copy of Herzl's published diary. She cherishes the text and doesn't see a contradiction between Herzl's ideas and her desire for EU citizenship. "His words were misused," she says. "His vision was taken over by right-wing political parties." An ardent liberal and supporter of a Palestinian state, Kedar made her decision out of frustration: The Israeli occupation seems firmly entrenched, the peace process irrevocably stalled. And in the near future, she and many others expect Israel to fight another war with radical Islamists in the region. "I wanted to open up options for me and my sons," she says. "I am not sure Herzl would have liked to be in Israel himself these days."

Kedar's left-wing views are in the minority in Israel, but her pursuit of dual citizenship has become more mainstream. Over the past 15 years, as the European Union has expanded while terrorism and war have continued to plague the Jewish state, Israelis have been rushing to acquire citizenship from the countries their relatives fled before and after the Holocaust. The Spanish government announced in July that it would grant citizenship to descendants of Jewish families that the nightmarish Inquisition in 1492 forced out, a move that is expected to bring even more applicants for a *darkon zar*, Hebrew for "foreign passport."

Between 400,000 and 500,000 Israelis have a European passport, says Yossi Harpaz, a doctoral student at Princeton University, more than double the estimated figure in 2000. Add that to the 500,000 Israelis who already have American, Russian and/or other passports, and that's about 1 million people, or roughly 1 in 8 Israelis, who have dual citizenship. Roughly 75 percent of the country is Jewish, and of that figure, nearly half trace their lineage to Europe. (The other half, known here as *mizrahim*, come from the Middle East and North Africa.) So for many Israelis, it seems the real two-state solution means holding a second passport.

This doesn't, however, mean that a large number of Israeli Jews will return to Europe for good. In fact, roughly the same number of Jews come to Israel each year as leave the country. Israelis acquire foreign passports in record numbers but seem to keep them for time of need; actual

BY
ASSAF UNI
[@Assaf_Uni](#)



PROMISED LAND:
Though some
Israelis are seeking
dual citizenship,
Israel is still a
haven for many,
like these
Ukrainian Jews
fleeing anti-
Semitism and
turmoil abroad.

migration from Israel has not changed substantially. “I wouldn’t rush to call it the end of Zionism,” says Harpaz. “but it means that there is a different way to be Israeli.” Yet some politicians warn that under the continued threat of terrorism, or the rise of a nuclear Iran, future generations of Israelis will eventually choose to leave. “I think the phenomenon is connected to the lack of security that Israelis often feel about the future of the country,” says Ofer Shelah, a prominent member of the Knesset for the centrist Yesh Atid party. “I thought the state of Israel was created partly in order to release us from the historic fears of the Jewish people, but it seems they are still there.”

Since the founding of Israel in 1948, the country

“I AM NOT SURE HERZL
WOULD HAVE LIKED
TO BE IN ISRAEL
HIMSELF THESE DAYS.”

has faced a variety of threats—from an attack by Egypt and Syria during the 1973 war to suicide bombings in nightclubs and cafés in the 1990s and 2000s. Today, roughly a year after the war in Gaza, the crowded coastal strip is quiet, but



Israel's security seems more precarious than ever. Despite the recent nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers—or perhaps because of it—many Israelis fear Iran will acquire nuclear weapons. Closer to home, ISIS militants (and their proxies) have closed in on Israel's borders with Egypt and Syria. Palestinian attacks have created havoc in Jerusalem, and to Israel's north, Hezbollah has roughly 100,000 rockets aimed at the Jewish state. As one European diplomat tells me, speaking on the condition of anonymity, "The minute there is a war with Gaza, I start to get calls from Israelis with dual citizenship wondering if my government will evacuate them in time of need."

In his research, Harpaz found that the main reasons Israelis want a foreign passport are to have an insurance policy for the next war, to be able to study abroad and to possess it as a status symbol. "Unlike in other countries," he says, "the security rather than the economic situation seems to play a major role in the wish for foreign passports."

Not every Israeli with a foreign passport wants to leave, however. Sometimes, the opposite is true. In recent years, the number of foreign passport holders has grown in Israel in part because of the influx of French Jews fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe; 7,300 moved to Israel last year, according to data provided by the Jewish Agency for Israel. And after the terror attacks in January on *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket in Paris, the number is expected to reach an all-time high this year.

On a recent Friday morning, I met some young Israelis waiting outside of the Polish Embassy in Tel Aviv. Among them: Maya Herzberg, a 28-year-old law student. She has been to Poland once, during a Holocaust remembrance trip in high school. "If Poland was not in the EU," she says, "I would have never done it. But this pass gives me an option to stay anywhere in the EU, and I am thinking of doing my master's somewhere in Western Europe."

Herzberg's mother, Sarah, is more concerned about her daughter's safety.

"Things are not getting better here," she says, "and we wanted to take care of our daughters if Israel will become a dangerous place to live."

Scenes like this could soon be replicated outside of the Spanish embassy. The number of potential applicants, according to Israeli estimates, is several hundred thousand, a figure that includes some *mizrahim* whose families wound up in Morocco or parts of the Middle East after being kicked out of Spain. But since the process requires showing a cultural connection to Spain, among other things, the number

—
"WE TRIED LIVING
SOMEWHERE ELSE FOR
A WHILE. IT DIDN'T WORK
OUT. LET'S START OVER."

could be substantially lower, say lawyers involved in the application process.

Kedar is expecting her passport any day now. "I have a fantasy," she says, "in which I go back to Budapest with my new passport. I go to the brewery that my family owned, which they sold for cheap before running away....I tell them, 'We're back.' We tried living somewhere else for a while. It didn't work out. Let's start over." **N**

BORDER LINE:
Nearly half a
million Israelis are
thought to have a
European passport,
more than twice as
many as in 2000.

+



ANAT MARTANE/CORBIS



What prompts an **EXCESSIVE HEAT WARNING** after two days in the U.S.

What the temperature felt like on July 31 in **BANDAR MAHSHAHR, IRAN**

**TWO
NUMBERS**

Fry-an-Egg Weather

SCORCHING TEMPERATURES ARE HAPPENING MORE FREQUENTLY ACROSS THE GLOBE

The minimum internal temperature that the U.S. government recommends for poultry is 73.8 degrees Celsius. That is also, give or take a couple of degrees, the temperature Iranians were subjected to on July 31 in the city of Bandar Mahshahr, in the country's southwest.

The "real feel" temperature of 72.7 degrees was a combination of an actual temperature of 46.1 and a dew point of 32.2. It was part of a heat wave that has baked the city recently, caused by "an unusually strong dome of hot air across the Middle East," says Anthony Sagliani, inter-

national meteorologist at AccuWeather. Combined with "extreme humidity," temperatures are on track to constitute one of the hottest summers ever in Iran.

Record heat in June in the northwest U.S., like 43.3 in Omak, Washington, and 40.5 in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, could also make 2015 a record-breaking year in America. Surface temperature across the U.S. has risen by 0.13 Fahrenheit each decade since 1901, with temperatures increasing the most in the country's north and west, and in Alaska.

The National Weather

Service issues an excessive heat warning when temperatures are expected to be at least 40.5 for two days, combined with nighttime readings that will not drop below 23.8. The threshold for issuing warnings varies throughout the country, as some states are more used to dealing with extreme heat than others.

Last year was Earth's hottest on record. Iran isn't the only Middle East country that felt the wrath of extreme heat this year. In the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, where temperatures reached 42 in August, some of its residents fried an egg using

natural heat. Heat waves hit Asia in June, killing 2,500 people in India and 2,000 in Pakistan. Dozens died in Egypt in August after temperatures reached 46.6.

"As science is telling us loud and clear," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the U.N.'s climate change negotiations in June, "We have only a few short years in which to do what is needed to have a reasonable chance of staying within the internationally agreed temperature-rise threshold of 2 degrees [Celsius]."

BY
LUCY WESTCOTT
@lvzwestcott

SOURCE: ACCUWEATHER, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL BYERS



MEXICO'S LAST VIGILANTES

They beat back the drug cartels, and then the government shut them down

IT WAS A bucolic scene, except for the burly, glowing men with big guns. When I first met Cemeí Verdía Zepeda, this past December, he was sitting with his two young children in front of his home in Santa Maria Ostula, a small indigenous village in the central Mexican state of Michoacán. Surrounding them, however, were more than a dozen stone-faced bodyguards brandishing automatic weapons. For more than a year, a brutal drug cartel called the Knights Templar had been trying to murder Verdía, the first commander of Michoacán's *autodefensas*, vigilante groups operating in one of Mexico's most lawless regions.

"I will die before I give up my struggle," the 37-year-old said, comparing himself to Emiliano Zapata, a key figure in the 1910 Mexican Revolution. "I too am fighting for the autonomy of my people. I fight for their safety and their right to live a life without fearing criminals or corrupt officials."

Over the past few years, the vigilantes, a rowdy band of mostly farmers, have captured the imagination of their country. When the Knights Templar took their land, hoping to control the lucrative market for crops such as limes and avocados, the vigilantes piled into beat-up trucks, rumbled across the state's mountainous Tierra Caliente region and used pistols, rifles and even rakes to take back their farms. The *autodefensas* helped restore a sense of order to a region that has suffered considerably during Mexico's brutal drug war, a conflict that's left an estimated 100,000 or more dead since it began in 2006.

Despite the vigilantes' success against the drug gangs—and some would say because of it—the government had seen enough. The *autodefensas* were a heavily armed force outside the army's control, and some feared they could morph into yet another cartel. Over the past year, the vigilante groups have fallen apart as the federal government has persuaded some among their ranks to join the police, which critics say was effectively an attempt at a payoff. Those who tried to keep the *autodefensas* together haven't been successful either. In late July, Verdía, one of the last vigilante leaders still operating in the area, was arrested by Mexican soldiers in the town of La Placita on charges of theft, possession of illegal firearms and murder. In early August, a federal court absolved him of the last charge, but he remains in prison. His arrest provoked an angry reaction from supporters in his hometown, who for hours blocked a bridge near the prison, demanding his release. The army arrived, the two sides clashed, and a 12-year-old boy was shot and killed in the melee, though it's unclear by whom.

"It was never going to end well" for the vigilantes, says Miguel Ángel Sánchez, a local political commentator. Long term, "there is really no way of preventing Michoacán...from being a hub for drug trafficking."

Maybe so. With the *autodefensas* now largely defunct, residents of Michoacán say violence has flared again, as new drug gangs have occupied the Tierra Caliente. "First, there was La Familia, then the Knights Templar," Germán



BY
JAN ALBERT
HOOTSEN
[@Jayhootsen](#)

Ramírez, alias “el Toro” (the Bull), the newly appointed leader of Santa María Ostula’s vigilantes, says of the cartels. “Now I wouldn’t even be able to tell you which gang controls the area.”

For as long as its inhabitants can remember, the Tierra Caliente has been a smugglers’ paradise. Strategically located along a lucrative drug trafficking route, Michoacán’s mountains and southern plains house countless meth labs and marijuana fields, while the large port city of Lázaro Cárdenas is an important transit point for shipping drugs north to the United States.

Until four years ago, the area was controlled by La Familia Michoacana, a ruthless drug gang known for decapitating rivals. Yet a civil war divided the cartel, and its offshoot, the Knights Templar, took over after a bloody turf war in 2011. Led by its new leader, an eccentric and media-hungry kingpin named Servando Gómez Martínez, aka “la Tuta” (the Teacher), the cartel began killing, kidnapping and extorting farmers for money on an unprecedented scale.

ARMS RACE: Some locals needed guns for protection against the violent drug gangs, and others needed them to drive the cartels off their farms.

MIGUEL TOVAR/LATINCONTENT/GETTY

Locals accused the state and federal government of colluding with the gangsters or simply looking the other way. They began secretly stockpiling hunting rifles and other weapons. They organized themselves in small battalions and made plans to run the gangs out of their villages. A small number of vigilante groups had existed for years, including Verdía’s. But it wasn’t until February 24, 2013, that a large number of autodefensas took up arms under the leadership of José Manuel Mireles, a charismatic local doctor.

By the following January, the ranks of the vigilantes had swelled to an estimated 7,000 members. And when the autodefensas conquered Nueva Italia, a Knights Templar stronghold, most of the vigilantes went into battle with bulletproof vests and automatic weapons, which they said they had confiscated from fleeing narcos. Some even covered their SUVs with steel plating, turning them into makeshift armored vehicles.

After the vigilantes had driven most of the Knights Templar out of the Tierra Caliente, the federal government finally acknowledged that it had, at least partially, lost control of the region. In January 2014, President Enrique Peña Nieto sent 3,000 soldiers and federal police to the area and appointed a longtime

MANY FORMER GANG MEMBERS WERE ALLOWED TO JOIN THE POLICE AND COMMITTED DRUG-RELATED CRIMES WHILE IN UNIFORM.

political associate, Alfredo Castillo, as special security commissioner to the state. As a nod to the vigilantes’ desire to remain in charge of security in the region, the government offered to incorporate the autodefensas in a newly formed rural police force. Their only demand: that



the vigilantes lay down their arms.

"The autodefensas are to return to their places of origin and to their daily lives," Interior Secretary Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong said in the wake of the federal deployment. "The institutions are now firmly in charge of the safety of their communities. There will be no tolerance whatsoever for anyone caught in possession of weapons without authorization."

Some leaders joined the rural police, but Mireles and Verdía, two of the most influential vigilantes, refused. Those who did join the police complained of low pay, lack of equipment and corruption. Many former gang members, they said, were allowed to join the police force and committed drug-related crimes while in uniform.

Before long, the former vigilantes and former narcos were fighting, both against each other and among themselves. The tensions boiled over last December when rural police groups led by Luis Antonio Torres and Hipólito Mora, two of the founders of the autodefensas, clashed in a gun battle, leaving 11 people dead, including one of Mora's sons. The government briefly arrested both leaders.

Mireles, who had vowed to continue his group's struggle, was arrested June 2014 in Lázaro Cárdenas. With him in jail, and Mora and Torres no longer active, Verdía became the last of the original autodefensa leaders still standing. He reluctantly joined the rural police this spring, but continued to defy the government by demanding the police hire more of his men and by carrying automatic weapons, which are illegal in Mexico unless you're in the military.

In the wake of Verdía's arrest, most autodefensas in the southern Tierra Caliente who refused to join the police stopped patrolling the area. Ramírez, Verdía's successor, is trying to maintain the group's revolutionary fervor, but his men no longer guard the mountains and beaches for fear of being attacked by criminals or arrested by the federal police. Together with several hundred civilians, they now maintain a single roadblock along the most important coastal highway to protest their commander's incarceration. "The criminals are still out there," says Ramírez, "while they keep the one

man who tries to keep us safe in jail."

In February, government forces arrested la Tuta, but with the vigilantes gone, little appears to have changed in Michoacán, even with the government's increased police presence. According to federal homicide figures, more than 1,100 people were murdered in the state between January and June of 2015, so this year will most likely wind up being more violent than the year before. Most observers say the area is now controlled by the Jalisco New Generation cartel. In recent months, the gang, based in the neighboring state of Jalisco, shot down an army helicopter and killed 15 federal police officers.

"THE CRIMINALS ARE STILL OUT THERE, WHILE THEY KEEP THE ONE MAN WHO TRIES TO KEEP US SAFE IN JAIL."

"It is a problem no one can manage," says Sánchez, the political commentator.

One problem the feds were able to manage: the autodefensas, unraveling their gains against the cartels in the process. Like Zapata before them, Verdía and Mireles challenged the authority of the federal government. "Which is why there has been a policy of getting rid of them," Sánchez says. "They were inconvenient." **N**

NO E-ZPASS: Some vigilante groups set up roadblocks to control the flow of contraband and criminals.



FELIX MARQUEZ/ARCHIVOLATINO/REDUX

BUSTING A FEW LOX

Russia is determined to keep out Norwegian fish

WHEN MOSCOW banned European food imports last year in response to Western sanctions over its actions in Ukraine, Norwegian salmon fishermen were faced with a problem. Russia was the Norwegian fishing industry's single largest export market. But the Norwegians were craftier than the Kremlin and found a way to wriggle off this hook. Within days, they were exporting their fish—most importantly salmon—to landlocked Belarus, which has a customs union with Russia. From there, it made its way to Russian fish counters. Between August and September of last year, sales of Norwegian fish to Belarus nearly tripled, from \$3 million to \$9 million.

But this August, the Russian government plugged the hole that allowed Norwegian salmon and other European delicacies to get to Russian shops.

"It has been one year since Russia introduced its import ban, but it's been an excellent year for us," says Trond Davidsen, deputy managing director of the

Norwegian Seafood Federation. "There are lots of people who are interested in Norwegian fish."

Between January and July of this year, Norwegian salmon sales to Belarus amounted to \$24 million, compared with \$17 million during the same period last year. Although the Belarus loophole was entirely legal, the Kremlin decreed in August that from now on all food originating in banned nations will be destroyed. That includes deliveries confiscated at the border and products arriving from Belarus that have made it to shops and warehouses.

In sometimes surreal scenes, thousands of tons of cheese and other food have been bulldozed and burned. The move has caused widespread outrage—and proved

an irresistible source of jokes. A tweet suggesting that the Russian Federal Customs Service's coat of arms should be Saint George slaying a sausage has been retweeted several hundred times.

The sanctions have led to hardship for Russia's poor because of higher prices of foods such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products. The Russian economy shrank by 4.6 percent in the second quarter of 2015, hit by the sanctions and lower oil prices. Tens of thousands of Russians have signed a petition demanding that instead of destroying foreign foods at the border, authorities should redistribute them to people in need. "Why should we destroy food that could feed war veterans, pensioners, the disabled, families with many children, victims

of natural disasters and other groups in need?" the petition reads.

At an upscale Moscow shop in August, the government's efforts appeared to have borne fruit. All the salmon available was Russian, and the staff reported not having seen "Belorussian" salmon for months. Several importers of Norwegian fish have gone bankrupt.

For now, Russian salmon lovers not keen on the domestic variety can enjoy large shipments from Chile. Chilean salmon is, however, considered to be of lesser quality than its Norwegian kin and arrives frozen. Even if the Kremlin lifts the sanctions, Norwegian salmon will be hard to come by. "If the Russians want fish again, I feel sorry for them," says Davidsen. "We don't have any left." **N**





EDI RAMA'S ALBANIAN RENAISSANCE

Can the prime minister of a small Balkan country with a bad reputation change the fortunes of the region, too?

ALBANIA'S prime minister, Edi Rama, is a fiery, statuesque and decidedly well-attired politician who stands nearly 6 feet 7 inches tall. As British political operative Alastair Campbell states in his book *Winners and How They Succeed*, Rama is not only the tallest world leader but, as a former league basketball player, the only head of government who has represented his country internationally at sport.

In 1993, when Rama was campaigning in Tirana's artsy fringe, Fred C. Abrahams, who was a

Human Rights Watch special adviser to Albania, remembers him attired in "a T-shirt with stick figures in different sexual positions." Now the 51-year-old prime minister prefers bright purple paisley ties, red-patterned pocket squares and elegantly cut three-piece suits. Both his stature and personality have led Rama to become one of the Balkans' most recognizable leaders—but in his clean, modest office, which overlooks Tirana's Boulevard Dëshmorët e Kombit, it is impossible to forget his unconventional political past.

BY
WILL NICOLL
[@williamnicoll](https://twitter.com/williamnicoll)

NICOLA LONGOBARDI / LUZPHOTO/REDUX



+ **RAMA RULES:** After years of corrupt politics, Albanians are hoping Rama, a former basketball player and artist, can make a difference.

Prior to entering politics, Rama was a respected artist and exhibited in Paris, Frankfurt and New York. Rama still doodles on his working papers, particularly his daily schedule. These doodles are transformed into his wallpaper. Violin concertos play in adjoining hallways and construction is occasionally audible as Rama discusses his vision for the Balkans. “Both here and in Kosovo, we want to have excellent relations with everyone,” Rama tells me. “We strongly believe that what has always been a reason for dispute—for wars, conflicts, bloodshed, hatred, separation, misunderstanding—can become a huge resource for excellent relations. Our minorities should act as bridges.”

Sharing borders with four Balkan countries and shaken by two decades of weak government, Albania became a problem state that stoked conflict in the former Yugoslavia—by acting as a porous territory for organized criminal groups engaged in people trafficking, gunrunning and smuggling drugs. Since 2013, under Rama, Albania has sought to become a star pupil for EU ascension, driving forward political and economic reform. Now Albania seeks international recognition for its efforts, and it is growing impatient—particularly as EU enlargement has been stalled indefinitely by the economic catastrophe in Greece. With 7 million ethnic Albanians scattered across the Balkan peninsula and unrest flaring as recently as May in Macedonia, it’s a critical time for Albania—and the EU risks alienating its greatest supporter in the region.

Elected in 2013, Rama crushed Albania’s incumbent prime minister, Sali Berisha, in an electoral landslide that saw his coalition of left-wing parties snatch 83 of the parliament’s 140 seats, and 57.6 percent of the vote. Rama’s evolution from basketball-playing artist to politician began when he won the Tirana mayoral race in 2000 and swiftly set about reshaping the decaying city—with a pallet knife, wrecking ball and pneumatic drill. Rama ordered the facades of buildings in the city to be painted in pastel hues—primarily green, yellow and violet—and he created 23 acres of parks and open spaces in a city that he likens to “a very chaotic Ottoman bazaar.” The ensuing benefits for pedestrians, and a surge in small-business growth, helped Rama win the title of world mayor in 2004. Despite these early successes, he was not prepared for the full extent of Albania’s problems when he became prime minister. Long-time adversary Berisha had been defeated, but



institutions were devastated by corruption, clientelism and links to organized crime.

“Financially, we have had to deal with a big mess,” Rama says. “The previous government had accumulated a huge amount of arrears—\$700 million for unpaid public works, unpaid services to hospitals and education, and for [value-added tax] owed to companies which had not been reimbursed.... In the energy sector our distribution company had inherited a debt of \$1 billion because of theft and losses in the system.” Furthermore, institutional failure had made the business community feel like the subject of a witch hunt. “People were subjected to a lot of harassment, a lot of unjustified penalties and a lot of bribery,” Rama says. Customs and the tax administration were corrupt, and “police were devastated by links to organized crime.”

In 2013, Albania stood at 116th of 176 countries

“PEOPLE WERE SUBJECTED TO A LOT OF HARASSMENT, A LOT OF UNJUSTIFIED PENALTIES, AND A LOT OF BRIBERY.”

in the Corruption Perceptions Index, published annually by Transparency International. By January 2015, Albania’s standing had improved to 110th. Rama has passed institutional reforms and tried to rein in corrupt businesses. As he told Albania’s Top Channel, his government’s recent investigations into Tirana’s “private universities” found some alarming practices. “We have workers of these universities, like painters or plumbers, who have not been paid in money but with diplomas,” Rama explained. “Some students have paid for their diploma with cows, sheep, rice or even firewood. We have registers saying, ‘The chief withdrew 10 diplomas.’” All 17 establishments were closed. There are other signs of progress on law and order: Police are patrolling Tirana’s roads, drivers face fines, bans on smoking in



public places are strictly enforced, and tax evasion investigations are yielding serious results.

Abrahams says he believes that although initial signs are positive, the government's success needs to be monitored. The West hastily embraced Berisha, who was hailed as an economic miracle worker in the early 1990s and returned to power as prime minister in 2005. In 1997, then-President Berisha tumbled from power after the collapse of enormous pyramid schemes that his government had supported. Two-thirds of Albanians lost a total of more than \$1 billion in savings, while 2,000 people were killed in subsequent unrest. As Abrahams explains in his book *Modern Albania: From Dictatorship to Democracy in Modern Europe* (and tells me, via email), for now "cautious and conditional support over optimistic zeal" is what this young democracy deserves.

"I think the optimism today about Rama's rule, and the support he's getting from Western states, is justified—to an extent," Abrahams says. "Rama is a very different Albanian ruler from what came before." However, Abrahams perceives a dilemma. "At the same time, he's also a product of that troubled political system, with its divisions, animosities and financial alliances. He has had to make deals, and those deals limit his maneuverability."

One byproduct of the Albanian electoral system is that coalition governments are the norm. Ilir Meta, speaker of the Parliament of Albania and a former prime minister under Berisha, switched his allegiance from the Democratic Party to Rama's Socialist Party in 2013, thus allowing Rama to win the election. Meta has been hounded by allegations of corruption. While ultimately acquitted by the Supreme Court of Albania for allegedly soliciting a 700,000-euro facilitation payment to rule favorably in a deal to build a power plant, the incident triggered widespread demonstrations in 2011—which were headed by Rama himself, then in opposition. Albanian tabloid newspapers often speculate about the nature of this alliance, but Abrahams suggests that Rama's ability to work alongside Meta displays an ability to compromise in a country where lack of dialogue has stalled progress.

Alastair Campbell, who is best known as Tony

Blair's former political strategist, helped create Rama's 2013 electoral landslide. He tells me, in a telephone interview, how they first met on the margins of a Tirana conference. Rama had lost the mayoral race to Luzlim Basha and was disillusioned by the state of Albanian politics. They subsequently agreed to work together, and Campbell describes the "sheer brutality" of Albanian politics. "Edi is both trying to win against this kind of attitude and also trying to change it. He has to be both very tough and also very empathetic," he tells me.

Among the challenges Rama faces is how to resolve ethnic tensions with his Balkan neighbors. Just days before he was due to meet his Serbian counterpart last October for the first such meeting in 68 years, a European Championship qualifying match between the two countries was abandoned after an unmanned drone hovered over the field carrying below it a Greater Albania flag—a

"RAMA IS A VERY DIFFERENT ALBANIAN RULER FROM WHAT CAME BEFORE."

reference to the nationalistic idea of an extended territory covering all the areas where ethnic Albanians live, including Kosovo. A Serbian player ripped down the flag, and brawls between players resulted in the cancellation of the game. Rama's brother, Olsi, was accused, without basis, of operating the drone, and the prime minister stepped in to resolve the tension through talks with Serbian Prime Minister Aleksander Vucic and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Rama says Europe needs to do more to welcome the Balkan nations. "Today, we have a peace in this region that we did not have in our history," he says. "And this is not the result of any evangelization of us. We are not angels and will never be—but this peace is the result of the aspiration of all of the people in this area to be part of Europe. If Europe will continue to show fatigue from enlargement, it risks seeing this region fatigued of patience. If patience is over, the Balkans will always become identified with bloodshed." Rama pauses. His forehead furrows, and his eyes appear wide and thoughtful. "Letting the Balkans, and its multi-religiosity, disintegrate would be a tragedy for every one of us." ■

Names in the News

UP, DOWN AND SIDEWAYS

[@WisdomWatch](#)



SHAKESPEARE



Pipes found in Bard's garden have traces of nicotine, cannabis and cocaine derivative. No definitive proof playwright used pipes, although one researcher insists a good clue lies in Sonnet 76, which mentions "invention in a noted weed." Shake was baked? That explains a lot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK



Researchers show director's movies to audiences, and find old people are more easily distracted. When the shower scene in *Psycho* came on, retirees started thinking about tomato soup.



CROWS



Neighbors sue parents of 8-year-old girl who fed hundreds of crows, saying the droppings have ruined their home. Court date is set for next year. That's not too far off, as the lawsuit flies.



FACEBOOK



Cans intern for exposing privacy flaw in Messenger app that allowed people to track location of friends to within 10 feet. Facebook fired him and, even worse, still won't tell him how to permanently delete his account.



COCA-COLA



Sponsors group of scientists to promote specious premise: Tubby Americans don't need to stop drinking sodas, they just need to exercise more. I'd like to teach the world to sing about Type 2 diabetes...



TRUMP



Responses in first debate score at fourth-grade level for vocabulary. Repeats simple words, like *I* and *great*; uses multisyllabic words—*rapist*, *murderer*, *loser*, *bimbo*—only when insulting someone.




THE HELL CANNONS OF ALEPPO

BY JAMES HARKIN

TO THE VICTOR
GO THE SPOILS,
BUT IN SYRIA'S
LARGEST CITY
THERE WON'T BE
MUCH LEFT





SLOW BURN: It's more than three years since the fight for Aleppo began. By late 2012, parts of the city were already in ruins.



ON JUNE 15, dozens of blue metal gas canisters fell from the sky and slammed into the streets of western Aleppo, Syria. “It was raining gas canisters,” remembers one shopkeeper. Locals here know them well and call them *jarra*. Filled with nails, ball bearings and crude explosives, the modified domestic propane cylinders are fired from homemade howitzers the rebels have dubbed “hell cannons” and have a range of less than a mile.

Nine days later, I’m strolling through Salaheddine, an intensely contested neighborhood in Aleppo that was one of the heaviest hit. Whole four-story houses have been reduced to rubble, and the Syrian army soldiers and their helpers—the regime paramilitaries known as *shabiha*—are keen to show me the damage. “The sound of booming didn’t stop for 16 hours,” one tells me. “Children passed away.” A Reuters report the day after the bombardment, based on data from the respected Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, estimates that 34 people, including 12 children, were killed. Those deaths were followed by a barrage of barrel bombs, or *barmeela*—the shrapnel-packed and equally indiscriminate flying improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that Syrian soldiers toss out of helicopters onto the rebel-held area.

Over three years, this crude slaughter by both sides has turned Aleppo into a Syrian Stalingrad. It has also divided the city into two distinct halves. In the June attack, the *jarra* came in such numbers and over such a wide area that they sowed mass panic. Three days before Ramadan, the point of this barrage was to trumpet a major new rebel assault on the regime-held

part of the city; the rebel militias, emboldened by new alliances and successes elsewhere in northern Syria, were hoping to break through the stalemate and take Aleppo once and for all. Their new offensive came amid persistent rumors that the Syrian regime might let go of the country’s second most import-

IN THREE YEARS OF FIERCE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING AND BOMBARDMENT, THE BATTLE LINES HAVE MOVED BARELY AN INCH.

ant city, the better to defend its heartlands in the south and west.

Could Aleppo really fall? I’d come back to the city to answer that question. My reason for visiting Salaheddine was more personal. I’d been here before, only a few streets away and on the other side of the line. When the armed rebel



UNDER FIRE: One of the hell cannons used by opposition fighters in Aleppo. Left, an injured woman arrives at a hospital after an airstrike on the outskirts of Aleppo in 2012.

groups first launched their war on Aleppo from the surrounding countryside in July 2012—again, on the eve of Ramadan—it was in Salaheddine that their impressive progress ground to a halt. A year later, embedded in a disused school with a battalion of the Free Syrian Army, I’d been taken to Salaheddine to see the place where my guide’s oldest son, a university-student-turned-rebel-fighter, had been shot dead by the Syrian army.

On my return, I recognize the neighborhood immediately, but it is strange to see it from the other side. In a tiny cabin just behind the front line, an officer drinks *mette*, an herbal tea Syrian soldiers sip to stay awake, and lazily thumbs through the papers that give me permission to be in the area. I ask which rebel groups are holed up just a few hundred yards away, but he finds the question unimportant. “Names don’t matter. It’s their actions,” he says. There’d been signs of some early rebel

advances in the fresh campaign; from what the officer has seen, however, it’s been mostly a shower of *jarra*. The rebels, he admits, control most of Salaheddine. “It’s a friction point. There is no movement—neither from this side nor that side.” In other words, in three years of fierce hand-to-hand fighting and bombardment, to which thousands of young Syrian men on both sides have given their lives, the battle lines have moved barely an inch.

THE PASSAGEWAY OF DEATH

IF THE BALANCE OF POWER inside Aleppo has hardly shifted in three years, the bigger picture in Syria is unrecognizable. While the capital, Damascus, looks more impregnable than ever, elsewhere the Syrian army’s myth of invincibility has been shattered. Its control over its territory is shrinking all the time, and nowhere more so than in northern Syria. To the east of Aleppo, it lost Raqqqa province to ISIS, which also rules over several cities and towns dotted around the area. And to the west of Aleppo, there’s Idlib, most of which is under the control of a coalition of rebel militias led by the Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda affiliate. Regime-held Aleppo finds itself almost entirely encircled, and it’s being squeezed as never before. If this, the country’s biggest city and its industrial powerhouse, were to fall, the Syrian Arab Republic would be reduced to a rump.

One result of Aleppo’s increasing isolation is that it’s very difficult to get here. The airport is closed to commercial flights, and what would have been the main road runs through Nusra-controlled territory in Idlib and is now

out of bounds. A journey from Damascus that would once have taken three hours requires a diversion through the Syrian desert and takes as long as eight hours. On my way to Aleppo, my taxi snaked in and out of convoys 100 trucks deep, all laden with food and fuel for the city and protected by a truck-mounted machine gunner, often a teenager, at both ends. Western Aleppo is now firmly under siege. And like in much of the rest of Syria, it's the journey that poses the greatest threat. The road comes under regular attack from Nusra and ISIS. A few days after I left, according to the Syrian Observatory, an attack on one part of the route left 18 regime forces dead.

Longer even than the journey from Damascus to Aleppo is the time it takes to get from one end of Aleppo to the other. Moving from the east to the western side of the city once took only a short bus ride. Now it involves navigating a labyrinth of side roads and as many as 20 checkpoints; an endurance test that can last between 10 and 16 hours. Most people don't bother. There is another, more direct route, but it's a dangerous one: a tiny, circuitous path between buildings, fortified with boulders and sandbags and leading out into an entirely different world, a street in the rebel-held Bustan al-Qasr area. When we leave Salaheddine, I ask to be taken to the crossing. Just to reach the entrance, I have to hunker down and dash between buildings. On the street outside the passageway, a lonely barber stands in his shop, stubbornly cutting hair. Two children have hurled themselves at one of the huge, heavily pockmarked street blankets hung up to block the view of snipers and are swinging back and forth like Tarzan.

Targeted by snipers on both sides, the corridor is known as the "passageway of death." I arrive at its entrance to find it strewn with discarded clothes, bits of piping and other garbage. For the first year of Aleppo's war, civilians braved it in attempts to keep in touch with friends and family, but not anymore. The only people allowed through now are the very sick or badly wounded. But for the last 30 days, one soldier tells me, it's been entirely empty. Possibly because of their new military campaign, he grumbles, the rebel groups have stopped letting people through.

The usual freedoms required for independent reporting are, in western Aleppo, gone. While reporters on official visas to Syria are sometimes left to their own devices in Damascus, Aleppo is a military zone. My regime-appointed translator has been instructed never to leave me alone. For the



MAKESHIFT WEAPONS: Opposition fighters in Aleppo rely on rocket launchers (above) and improvised explosives fashioned from domestic propane canisters.

past two years, I've been in regular touch on Skype with a well-known activist and journalist who lives in western Aleppo and writes under the pseudonym Edward Dark. For his involvement in civil disobedience early in Syria's revolt, he was briefly held in one of the city's more brutal security gulags. Recently, however, he's turned against the rebels too, accusing them on Twitter of looting and murder. When I told him I was

FROM TOP: SALAH AL-AZHAR/AP/GETTY; KARIM ALMASRI/NUR



BLOOD FLOW: More than 220,000 Syrians have been killed since the conflict started in 2011, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

the conflict broke out, he took to writing about the parlous state of public utilities and the profiteering on both sides that followed. Before long, he had more than 20,000 subscribers.

Over a long coffee at my hotel, chain-smoking thin cigarettes with a conspiratorial giggle and tolerating the presence of my Ministry of Information translator, el-Sayed does his best to explain how his beloved city fell apart. The largely peaceful uprising that shook

“DEATH HAS BECOME OUR TERRIBLE FRIEND.”

Syria in 2011 came here late and began with the city’s university students. The problem, opposition groups elsewhere in Syria argue, was that Aleppo’s merchants and its commercial class were too concerned with profits to overthrow the system; plus, they weren’t sure of this new movement and who might be pulling its strings. When the secret police and the *shabiha* cracked down hard on the students, they turned to family in the surrounding countryside who were farmers with more access to guns. The masses of impoverished peasants eking out a living around Aleppo had their own beef with Syria’s regime, and unlike the students, they were fortified by traditional religion. When they too were confronted with extreme violence by regime forces, the whole insurrection was handed to extremists, foreigners, Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

“Moderate arms became extremist arms,” says el-Sayed. “The peaceful movement became a religious, armed, extremist movement. But when you take up arms against the government, you should expect the government to react. What did they expect?”

headed for Aleppo, he said it would be too dangerous for us to meet. “Syria is a police state,” he wrote. “Usually only vetted people are allowed to talk to foreign journalists; if they’re not vetted, they know that what they’re saying is being overheard, so they self-censor.” He suggested I go see Alaa el-Sayed, an independent local lawyer. In 2007, el-Sayed established a small online newsletter to investigate corruption. When

The armed rebels in eastern Aleppo are now arranged in two weighty coalitions; one loosely associated with the Free Syrian Army, elements of which are supported by the United States, and the other dominated by Al-Qaeda. But it’s not so easy to separate the good guys from the bad guys in Syria; it was Free Syrian Army battalions that perfected the *jarra*. El-Sayed estimates that about 10 civilians are killed a day by *jarra* and mortars, mostly in front-line neighborhoods like Salaheddine. (The figures collected by the Syrian Observatory are slightly different. When I spoke to its director, Rami Adbulrahman, he estimated that mortars and *jarra* caused 670 fatalities, including 130 children, in western Aleppo between February 2014 and February 2015.) “Sometimes I sit with my friends in the morning only to hear that during the night they’ve



DAILY GRIND: A group of opposition fighters sit around a fire pit in eastern Aleppo, December 2014.

passed away,” says el-Sayed. “Death has become our terrible friend.”

On the other side, civilians are frequently killed by barrel bombs, which the U.N. has banned but President Bashar Assad’s forces continue to use. El-Sayed says he sometimes sees people gloating on Facebook over the deaths of civilians on the other side. “If you get hit, you don’t mind if someone else gets hit too. It’s human nature.”

Western Aleppo has always been more affluent than the east, and many of its rich residents and its professionals have departed. Thousands of the civilians who once lived in the rebel-held side of the city have taken their place—swapping barrel bombs and lawlessness under the rebels for the relative safety of an authoritarian regime. Although no one is sure of the figures, el-Sayed’s rough guess is that 1.8 million people now live in western Aleppo, with only half a million still living in the east. For those on the other side, conditions are worse; almost everyone there survives on food aid of some kind. If he traveled to the rebel side, I ask, what would happen to him? “I don’t know,” he chuckles. “Shall we go together?” Journalists are now being systematically kidnapped in eastern Aleppo, mostly for money; both of us know it would not be a good idea for me to go.

ROOSTERS AND SNIPERS

NOT EVERYTHING IS GLOOM in western Aleppo. In the luminescent humming downtown Azizieh neighborhood in the late evening, well-dressed young people, most of them Christians, hang out, drink coffee and

smoke *shisha*. It’s possible to imagine that the war is going on in a different city, but rarely for very long. When utilities are working, citizens of western Aleppo get about three hours of electricity per day and running water once or twice a week. But very often they don’t. In an email, Dark told me he hadn’t had electricity or

“IF YOU GET HIT, YOU DON’T MIND IF SOMEONE ELSE GETS HIT TOO. IT’S HUMAN NATURE.”

running water for the previous three weeks. In the narrow market streets, I see young men hovering on ladders fixing braids of brightly colored, improvised wiring above people’s heads to connect their homes to a local generator.

There’s plenty of ingenious make-do-and-mend on both sides of Aleppo’s war, but the city has essentially been



CIVILIAN CASUALTIES: A father holds his dead child in front of Dar al Shifa hospital in Aleppo after the Syrian army shelled part of the city, October 2012.

crippled. The day after meeting with el-Sayed, I visit Aleppo's Old City and its famous Souk al-Madina, a UNESCO world heritage site that has long been the location of daily skirmishes. Both are in ruins. Over the course of an hour, the only inhabitants I see are two roosters, carefully picking through broken glass, moving as if to avoid the snipers. (The week after my trip to Aleppo, UNESCO announced that 60 percent of the Old City has been destroyed.) Then, on a tour of the Sheikh Najjar industrial zone outside the city's northeastern entrance, which until a year ago was in the hands of ISIS, the site manager puts a brave face on the attempts to bring Aleppo's once-thriving industry back to life. But the thump of occasional incoming shells is clearly audible, and almost everything here that hasn't been burned out is gone. "Sixty percent or 70 percent of all the machinery here was taken in a

single year," he says, "or was melted down to make mortars."

Lawlessness is not confined to the rebel side. Even in this police state, theft and criminality are on the rise. A military policeman tells me that his work now involves combating "mostly thievery." And though the Syrian authorities aren't keen to show them off, certain areas of western Aleppo, according to Dark, are now thick with their own foreign fighters—Hezbollah from Lebanon and Shiite militia from Iraq. Some of the gung ho paramilitaries I see in the street, loosely uniformed and letting off steam, are rowdy and irreverent.

Just about everyone I speak to back in western Aleppo is contemplating leaving, or at least getting their children out. Four million Syrians have already left the country and are counted as refugees. The people who remain are growing desperate. No one talks about freedom anymore; now they just want to live.

Will Aleppo fall? "Not today. But tomorrow—who knows?" says el-Sayed, rolling his eyes. If it does, a rebel victory would lead to another flight of refugees and redouble the humanitarian disaster that already exists in the east of the city. Most people in western Aleppo, according to Dark, have no love for either side: "You could describe Aleppo as largely neutral, having seen the worst of both rebel and regime atrocities." **N**

*James Harkin's trip to Syria was taken with the help of The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. His book *Hunting Season*, about the rise of ISIS, will be published by Hachette in November.*

Breaking the Grass Ceiling

Female pot entrepreneurs could make marijuana legal nationwide, help reform the criminal justice system and build gender equality into a billion-dollar industry. Put that in your pipe and smoke it

By Gogo Lidz





IT SEEMS fitting that a plant called Mary Jane could smash the patriarchy. After all, only female marijuana flowers produce cannabinoids like the potent THC chemical that gets users buzzed. Pot farmers strive to keep all their crops female through flowering female clones of one plant, called the Mother. And women are moving into the pot business so quickly that they could make it the first billion-dollar industry that isn't dominated by men.

In Washington, Greta Carter says she's the mom with the most mother plants and the most lucrative female flowering crops of any legal pot farm in her state. A former Citibank vice president and mother of five, Carter is just a little bit country: She has a gap-toothed smile and a shaggy platinum bob the same hue as Dolly Parton's. Of the 2,400 people who applied for the first recreational marijuana growing facility licenses in the Evergreen State in 2012, Carter was the 71st approved. Her first weed ranch, the 45,321-square-foot farm Life Gardens near Ellensburg, is now one of the biggest and oldest legal recreational marijuana farms in the world.

Three years ago, Carter had a vital and potentially dangerous mission: find as many still-outlawed marijuana strains as

possible in just 15 days. The 2012 ballot initiative that authorized the recreational sale of marijuana didn't specify where the newly certified growers could obtain them, and there was just a 15-day window during which Carter says the government agreed to "close its eyes." To start their weed farm, Carter and her partners had to acquire plants from illegal dealers—and did they ever. They amassed about 1,600 plants of 70 or so different strains.

The hardest part was smuggling the contraband to her farm. "It was scary," says Carter. "We had so many plants that, technically, we weren't covered under Washington law." She loaded her 1,600 plants into the back of a semi and didn't look back until she reached Life Gardens. "It was such a relief when I arrived home," she says. "Everything within those fences is protected by the state. Otherwise, the feds could have arrested me."

Carter would know: She helped write Washington's Initiative 502, the measure that legalized pot for anyone 21 and older, and hatched the state's first marijuana trade organization, the Coalition for Cannabis Standards & Ethics. She says that when sales of recreational pot were proposed in 2012, the state Liquor Control Board approached the CCSE for information. "The board didn't know the difference between butane extract and cannabinoids," she says. "We all kind of grew together. I was able to influence some of the rules and regulations, and I'm still influencing those rules and regulations."

Carter didn't birth I-502 alone: The author of the measure was Alison Holcomb, a director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and self-described "soccer mom." You might not expect a Venn diagram containing "soccer moms" and "weed" to have much overlap, but a decade ago, Jenji Kohan created a TV dramedy exploring that odd intersection. *Weeds*, which ran on Showtime for eight seasons, starred Mary-Louise Parker as a "hemptress" who dealt dope in an upper-middle-class, white suburban neighborhood. "We scream inappropriate," Kohan told EW.com about the show. "And there are consequences for the impropriety."

Not so much anymore. During the past few years, hundreds of women have been screaming along with *Weeds*—but as models of propriety in the newly regulated marijuana industry. Indeed, many female entrepreneurs are striking Acapulco Gold. Though the industry is still predominantly male and employment statistics are somewhat vaporous, the power and influence of women are, by all signs, on the upswing. In the summer of 2014, Women Grow—a professional marijuana



FROM LEFT: ISAAC BREKKE FOR NEWSWEEK; JON PACARON/GETTY
PREVIOUS PAGE: SETH MCCONNELL/THE DENVER POST/GETTY

GREEN QUEEN: Attorney Amanda Connor (pictured opposite page) in the offices of her client, Nevada Pure. Connor and her husband have started one of the first law practices that cater to the newly legal marijuana business.

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‘mainstream’ experience looking to join the marijuana industry,” she says. “With time, there will be more women with marijuana experience.”

Just like in Washington, women in Colorado were important players in the crafting and implementation of the legalization measure amendment. Title joined the Amendment 64 campaign in the summer of 2012. “As a senior staffer, I worked with several other women on the campaign,” she says. Most notably, attorney Tamar Todd, now the director of marijuana law and policy for the Drug Policy Alliance; Betty Aldworth, the



women’s networking group—launched with just 70 people; today, the monthly chapter meetings in 30 cities attract more than 1,000 women nationwide. The two-year-old Marijuana Business Association, a Seattle-based B2B trade group, started a Women’s Alliance in 2014 that now boasts 500 members. In just two years, Women of Weed, a private social club in Washington, has seen its membership swell from eight to 300.

Drug reform activist attorney Shaleen Title says half of the employees at her marijuana recruitment agency, THC Staffing, are women. “I am especially seeing more women with corporate

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN WEED ARE, BY ALL SIGNS, ON THE UPSWING.

primary spokeswoman and now executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy, which supports other young women activists; and Rachelle Yeung, now an attorney with Vicente Sederberg, a marijuana-focused law firm. Title says women were chosen deliberately in order to reach women. “Betty had a particular ability to relate to the mainstream. I had previously helped with California’s Prop 19 campaign in 2010, where we had trouble securing women’s votes before the initiative ultimately failed. We knew that women’s votes were crucial.”



“I AM SEEING MORE WOMEN WITH CORPORATE ‘MAINSTREAM’ EXPERIENCE LOOKING TO JOIN THE MARIJUANA INDUSTRY.”

In Colorado and Washington, the key demographic in the legalization movements were 30- to 50-year-old women, according to a study by the Wales-based Global Drug Policy Observatory. “I think women can help demonstrate that it’s a reasonable choice for a lot of people,” Title adds. “And it’s not going to turn you into Cheech or Chong.”

Most recently, Title helped draft an initiative in Massachusetts to legalize marijuana for recreational use. Another pending ballot initiative, for California in 2016, is sponsored by the Marijuana Policy Project.

Marijuana legalization has been billowing through the states in the past three years faster than most people can say “Sensi Star.” “It’s one of the fastest-moving social issues I’ve ever seen,” says Nevada Representative Dina Titus, a pot advocate in Congress. To date, 40 states and the District of Columbia have legalized the drug in some form, primarily for medicinal purposes. In four of those states (Alaska, Oregon, Colorado and Washington) and D.C., recreational marijuana is allowed and anyone over 21 can purchase it. But the war on drugs is still being fought, and when it comes to ending it, “we have a long way to go before we get there,” Titus says.

Despite its illegal federal status, the marijuana business is one of the nation’s newest and fastest-growing industries. Regulated weed (medical and recreational) made \$2.7 billion in na-

tionwide revenue in 2014 alone, up from \$1.5 billion in 2013 (medical only, the first recreational shops weren’t open in Washington and Colorado until January 2014). By 2019, the pot sold in all states and districts with legalization is projected to reach nearly \$11 billion yearly, according to estimates by ArcView Market Research, an Oakland, California-based pot-focused investor network and market research company.

As pot legalization spreads, women are taking over more roles in the industry. There are female cannabis doctors, nurses, lawyers, chemists, chefs, marketers, investors, accountants and professors. The marijuana trade offers women a shortcut to get ahead in many avenues, and women in turn are helping to organize it as a viable business. Eloise Theisen in Lafayette, California, started the American Cannabis Nurses Association. Emily Paxhia analyzes the cannabis financial marketplaces as a founding partner at the marijuana investment firm Poseidon Asset Management. Meghan Larson created Adistry, the first digital advertising platform for marijuana. Olivia Mannix and Jennifer DeFalco founded Cannabrand, a Colorado-based pot marketing company. In Berkeley, California, three female lawyers—Shabnam Malek, Amanda Conley and Lara Leslie DeCaro—started the National Cannabis Bar Association, and Conley and Malek also started Synchronicity Sisters,

FROM LEFT: DOMENICO PUGLIESE/EVEVINE; ISAAC BREKKEN FOR NEWSWEEK

UP IN SMOKE: Marijuana's hazy legality on the federal level make taxes a nightmare. Most weed businesses pay them in cash—which the IRS fines—because banks shun them.

which hosts Bay Area “Tupperware parties” to sample pot products made by women for women.

Among the most successful pot pioneers are the women who spot a void in the marketplace and fill it. In Washington, Carter's latest marijuana brainchild is a co-op, along the lines of the autonomous associations that unite the state's apple and produce farms. Within the marijuana community, it's believed that the federal government will legalize marijuana soon, and Carter plans to open cultivation and processing centers in Nevada, Alaska and Florida.

Maureen McNamara is starting a statewide certification program in Denver for people in the pot business. Many marijuana edible chefs take her



Food Safety classes and her Sell Smart program is popular among marijuana retailers. She works directly with Colorado's Marijuana Enforcement Division, and her curriculum is awaiting approval from the state's Department of Health to become the first certified responsible vendor program, much like those in the bar and alcohol business.

Cannabis science seems to be where women are making the most progress the fastest. Genifer Murray, a scientist who runs a Colorado cannabis testing facility called CannLabs, says she employs mostly women with advanced science degrees. “In a typical science, like environmental or medical, it would take them 20 to 30 years to become something,” she says. “We're in the infancy. My scientists are going to be cannabis experts—some already are.”

Murray insists that women are better suited for the cannabis industry and will keep flocking to it. “This is a compassionate industry, for the most part, especially if you're dealing with the medical side. The medical patients need time and consideration, and women are usually the better gender for that. The industry is flat-out geared for women.”

AMANDA CONNOR is an attorney who, along with her husband, launched a Nevada-based practice that focuses on weed business law. Though particularly adept at navigating the murky waters of the regulated marijuana industry, Connor calls the weed industry a “legal minefield,” because anyone who gets into the trade is a criminal in the eyes of the feds.

A former kindergarten teacher, Connor is a mother of two who lives on the grounds of a country club in the Vegas burbs. At her children's elementary school, some parents won't let their kids hang out with hers. “The mothers and fathers don't approve of my work. You've got to be willing to have taboo associated with you. Not that I feel like I'm committing any crime at all.”

Pot is currently classified by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as a Schedule I drug, which, according to the agency's website, is “the most dangerous of all drug schedules,” with a “high potential for abuse” and “no currently accepted medical use.” Marijuana shares that classification with heroin, bath salts and what CNN has called the “flesh-eating Zombie drug,” Krokodil. Crystal methamphetamine and cocaine are Schedule II drugs—which means the feds consider meth safer than marijuana.

“On account of its federal status, most big law firms don't want to touch weed,” Connor explains. “Ethically, lawyers aren't supposed to give advice about illegal activities. Major firms are afraid to lose clients.” Her boutique firm may be the only one in the country that takes marijuana providers through the entire byzantine process, from licensing to opening a shop.

Another renegade is Boulder, Colorado-based marijuana tax law attorney Rachel Gillette. She recently sued the IRS—and won—on behalf of a client who was denied an abatement of a 10 percent penalty for paying his taxes in cash. But cash was the only option: Because of federal law, marijuana enterprises deal only in cash, as banks shun them. “It's a difficult situation for many marijuana businesses, with regard to banking,” says Gillette. “Most banks do not take marijuana business accounts, even in states where it is legal. They can't afford the compliance cost. It's too risky.” So far, Gillette has been the only marijuana attorney to beat the IRS on this issue.

Women face more problems than just snoops from the DEA or IRS—they also have to worry about Child Protective Services. Fortunately, there are women working in cannabis-specific roles to fix that too. “There's an incredible amount of misogyny in both the political movement and the industry,” says Sara Arnold, co-founder of Family Law & Cannabis Alliance, which helps mothers who have had their children taken away by CPS due to an association with medical marijuana.

Arnold became involved with the issue when she was investigated by CPS for her medical marijuana use. “At the time, no one else was talking about CPS, custody battles or anything

regarding cannabis and parental rights,” she says. “So I started talking and writing about it, and then helping people on my own.... I consider this my life’s work.”

The scariest moment of Dale Sky Jones’s career was when she thought she’d have her kids taken away. Sky Jones, a longtime marijuana activist and founder of the California medical marijuana training school Oaksterdam University, was pregnant with her second child and watching after her first kid (2½ at the time) when she was asked to participate in a press conference on pot. She took her toddler with her to the conference (there wasn’t any marijuana there, only a room full of reporters) to discuss legalization in Mexico.

Later, one of the reporters, columnist Debra Saunders, called her and told Sky Jones the subject of her article was the fact that she had brought her son to a pot press conference. “I started to cry because I knew what she could do,” Sky Jones says. “I could get my kids taken for bringing one of them to a cannabis conference. She put a target on my back and on my kids’ foreheads. [But] nothing ever happened. Thank God.”

THE STANDARD-BEARING men in the weed industry have taken notice of all the new women. “It’s common to find women running businesses throughout the industry and holding key positions in dispensaries, retail stores, cultivation operations, infused products companies and ancillary firms,” says Chris Walsh, founding editor of Marijuana Business Daily, a marijuana news source and host of a national industry conference. “When planning our Marijuana Business Conference & Expo these days, we have a wealth of women leaders to choose from.” ArcView CEO Troy Dalton says he’s seen a flood of women in the marijuana industry over the past year, and adds that it’s also “become very unfashionable very quickly to have scantily clad women repping products at B2B trade shows.”

But women’s presence in the pot industry does more than just close the gender gap—their participation is necessary to legitimize marijuana as a business. “The mom in her 40s is the one with the power to push marijuana into the mainstream once and for all,” says Title, the drug reform attorney.

During the Great Depression, a New York society dame named Pauline Sabin played a key role in overturning Prohibition. She had been part of the national temperance movement, composed mostly of women, who believed that drinking liquor was destructive and that banning it would solve America’s social ills. But after the 18th Amendment was ratified, in 1919, Sabin became distressed by the hypocrisy of politicians, the ineffectiveness of the law and the growing power of bootleggers



POT OF GOLD: Conferences, like the Cannabis World Congress and Business Expo in New York seen here, provide women in weed with a way to connect with one another on a national scale.

and gangsters. In 1929, she founded the Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform. She testified before Congress, lobbied both political parties and built support for the amendment’s repeal. By 1932, the WONPR had 1.5 million members. Sabin was so formidable that *Time* magazine ran her picture on its cover. Drinking suddenly had a new face—and it belonged to an exceedingly proper lady.

Today, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws annually bestows its Pauline Sabin Award on a female activist “in recognition of the importance of women in leadership positions in organizations dedicated to ending marijuana prohibition.” This year’s award recipient was Ellen Komp, deputy director of NORML California. Komp says she received the award for her longevity: She’s been speaking out about marijuana reform for 22 years—or, as she puts it, “since the days when I was often one of the only women in the room.”

But the woman who appears to have united the most women in the marijuana industry this year is Jane West, the founder of Women Grow. West, by her own admission, is “one part Martha Stewart and one part Walter White.” In 2012, she was fired from her corporate job in Denver after vaping on camera in a local news interview. It was the night Amendment 64 passed, making pot legal in Colorado. A clip of the segment played on national TV. Afterward, she launched her own

“WOMEN DEMONSTRATE THAT [POT] WON’T TURN YOU INTO CHEECH OR CHONG.”

marijuana event-planning company, Edible Events. “When I first entered the industry, I joined all the women’s groups,” she says. “I tried and waited for four months in Denver, but there wasn’t a single meeting. Weed had just become legal, and all of the women in the Women’s CannaBusiness Network told me they were now too busy with their businesses to hold meetings. That’s when I decided to start Women Grow.”

Soon after, she was joined by Jazmin Hupp, whom she met at a National Cannabis Industry Association conference. Hupp had previously started a group for female founders in tech called Women 2.0, the group West modeled Women Grow on. In February, West’s newsletter had an open invitation to help lobby Congress for cannabis legalization. She didn’t expect anyone to show, but 78 women—all wearing red scarves to show solidarity—came to D.C. for the event.

This month, Representatives Titus and Eleanor Holmes Norton, of the District of Columbia, spoke at Women Grow events. Norton believes groups like Women Grow and the women in the legal pot business increase the chances of federal legalization. She says she’s noticed that the female potpreneur population is “growing faster than” the marijuana legalization movement itself. She’s equally impressed by the number of women who have entered the D.C. cannabis

A NEW LEAF: Since marijuana became legal in some states (like in Washington, pictured), women have joined all aspects of the industry.

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industry “so early on.” (D.C. legalized recreational marijuana only a few months ago.) “How in the world are there so many women entrepreneurs in this very new commercial field?” she asks. “Women aren’t even seen as particularly entrepreneurial.” She was even more excited about how these women “pioneers” were changing the public perception of the pot business.

For Norton, legalizing marijuana is more than just creating a booming business with gender equity in her district. It’s also about ending the war on drugs and reforming a racially biased criminal justice system. “A concern in the District of Columbia was the disparity in who gets arrested. We think we’ve licked that with the legalization that we have been able to do.”

More than \$51 million is still spent annually by the U.S. on the war on drugs. According to the ACLU, 7 million citizens were busted for weed in this country between 2001 and 2010. Studies have shown that although marijuana usage rates among blacks and whites are roughly equal, blacks are almost four times more likely to be booked. But Norton says that her colleagues’ reports show that since D.C. legalized marijuana, the illegal market has pretty much dried up. “Even teenagers smoke less than they did before legalization,” she says. “So what’s to be against here?”

Marijuana legalization has become a bipartisan issue. For Democrats, it’s “tied to criminal justice reform,” says Titus. “For the Republicans, it’s more tied to issues of states’ rights.”

Recently, Congress passed three legislative amendments to prevent the DEA and the Department of Justice from undermining state marijuana laws. Some \$23 million was trimmed from the DEA’s budget, which is shifting its attention to child abuse, rape kits, the national deficit and internal police corruption cases.

Titus says Women Grow is inspiring her to bring together other women in Congress to push for legalization and drug reform laws. She’s teamed with Representative Barbara Lee of California, the only other woman who’s advocated for weed in Congress. Will they start their own Women Grow in Congress? “I think that’s a possibility, and that’s what we should be working on,” Titus says. “I have traveled with Barbara in California, and I think she’s amenable to that. So I guess we need to get Eleanor on board too.”

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, I visited Gecko Farms, in that other Washington. Gecko Farms is a charter member of Greta Carter’s co-op. The first thing I noticed was the ladybugs crawling all over the pot leaves, their bright red shells conspicuously juxtaposed against the greenery. “Ladybugs eat mites off marijuana plants,” Carter explains.

Buzzing and crawling, the cute insects instantly changed my perception of the grow house from an illicit drug den to a charming indoor or outdoor garden. And just like the ladybugs in the grow house, women in the brave new legal world of marijuana are doing important work while helping to alter perceptions of this Schedule I drug.

Nearby, in Gecko’s drying rooms, horticulturists dressed in what looked like hazmat suits. Contamination is a big concern, Carter explains, and state inspection is stringent. “It’s funny how scared people are of a plant,” she says. **N**



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I S E

BY JUSTIN NOBEL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN DEPP

**AFTER KATRINA, A CANADIAN BILLIONAIRE TRIED TO
CREATE AN AGRARIAN SHANGRI-LA FOR THE
DISPLACED URBAN POOR. THEY WERE NOT AMUSED**

AS DUSK FALLS IN CENTRAL LOUISIANA'S CAJUN COUNTRY, 57-YEAR-OLD MICHAEL THOMAS, IN A WHITE V-NECK T-SHIRT AND TAN SAINTS CAP,

smokes a cigarette in the glow of a streetlight and stares at the dark, empty homes in his mostly abandoned neighborhood. "It would be real nice if we had neighbors," he says, "people we can talk to at night."

After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, an Austrian-Canadian auto parts tycoon named Frank Stronach resettled about 300 of the city's residents on a 1,000-acre sugarcane plantation in rural Louisiana. The community was initially called Magnaville, after Stronach's auto parts manufacturing company, Magna International, based in Aurora, Ontario, but it came to be known as Canadaville—since Canada was the source of the unexpected benevolence. It was intended to be an agrarian refuge for the urban poor, an opportunity for city dwellers, nearly all of whom were black, to have a safe new home in the country (with a five-year financial commitment by Magna) and learn new skills, like how to farm organic vegetables and raise goats. And just maybe, imagined Stronach and his team, the project would help spawn a new chapter in development aid by proving to the world that corporations could inject themselves into the aftermath of a natural disaster and not only introduce quick relief but also solve endemic inner-city problems by bringing people back to the land.

If it sounds like a beautiful vision, in many ways it was, and if it sounds like a misguided vision, in many ways it was that too. In the long and troubled history of ambitious development aid projects, Canadaville may be one of the strangest.

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PARTY FRIDAY TO MONDAY

It all began August 23, 2005, in the Bahamas, as a weak blob of wind and thunderstorms called Tropical Depression Twelve. By August 27, Hurricane Katrina was a formidable storm, with winds of 115 mph, bearing down on the Big Easy. Per tradition, many residents were celebrating at *hurricane parties*, "drinking and

drinking and drinking," remembers Lower 9th Ward resident Neal Dupar. The next day, Katrina morphed into a monster Category 5 hurricane, and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin (now serving a 10-year prison sentence on corruption charges) ordered a mandatory evacuation. "We're facing the storm most of us have feared," Nagin announced at a news conference. But he also revealed that the city had no plans for evacuating the 112,000 residents who didn't own vehicles, or those who were too old or sick to leave on their own.

On Monday, August 29, at 6:10 a.m., Katrina came ashore. By noon, levees were failing, and within hours much of the city was inundated. Residents trapped in attics and on rooftops cried for help, bodies floated through the streets, government aid organizations such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency were paralyzed, and the world watched, stunned, as a major American city crumpled. That's when Stronach stepped in to help. "When people are drowning, you don't form a committee and talk about how to save them. You jump in and throw them a life preserver," says Shane Carmichael, a Toronto consultant tapped by Stronach to manage the Canadaville project.

A week after the storm, around 330 people—most of them residents of New Orleans—were transported to a thoroughbred racehorse training facility Stronach owned in West Palm Beach, Florida. About half of the future Canadavillians were taken there by bus, and half were flown in a plane used by the American Red Cross to evacuate people. The Red Cross also helped Magna choose the residents who would populate the new community. Once at the racetrack, people stayed in dormitories meant for jockeys, who were gone for the summer. Meanwhile, Magna went looking for a place to build Stronach's refugee paradise.

He settled on Simmesport, a town of about 2,200 just a few miles from the spot where the Atchafalaya River snakes off from the Mississippi and beats its own shorter path south to the Gulf of Mexico. The town was poor—about a third of the residents are be-

ASS-BACKWARD: Community mules were just one of several earnest but perhaps misguided attempts to make the insta-town self-sufficient.





JUNKIE NEIGHBORHOOD: Lanehart, who lives nearby, likes Canadaville but not the crime-ridden town adjacent to it, and says he wouldn't want to raise his kids there.

low the poverty line—and the port commission hoped that Canadaville would bring development and maybe even spark interest in the port. It sold Magna a 900-acre plot of land on the outskirts of the town.

Magna scurried to put together the basis for a brand-new community. A team of carpenters from Canada, along with local contractors, built 49

"A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE IT WAS A GOOD PLACE, BUT IT WAS LIKE WE WERE IN JAIL."

single-family prefab homes, plus a baseball diamond, basketball court, community center and other amenities. By the end of November, Canadaville had been built, and Air Canada flew residents at no charge from West Palm Beach to Alexandria, Louisiana, where they were put on a bus to Simmesport.

They all were to receive free housing for five years, and in turn had to actively participate in the functioning of the community. A document called the "Covenant of Responsibility" required adult residents to be in school and either employed or looking for work. They also had to do eight hours of community service a week, choosing from

activities such as coaching in the basketball league or tutoring children in an after-school program.

One goal of the project was to make it easier for residents to produce their own food. It featured a catfish pond, a pecan orchard, organic chickens, a pasture with goats and a developmental farm upon which residents were supposed to tend their personal vegetable gardens. Agriculture experts from nearby universities were brought in to study the feasibility of growing organic vegetables in Louisiana soil and to help residents new to farming with their gardens. There was counseling for residents with drug and alcohol problems. There were also regular community meetings, with mandatory attendance. "The plan was to create environmental social change through corporate social responsibility," says Carmichael. "It was to be a hands-up, not a hand-out, project."

But not all Big Easy transplants were fond of the rules. "A lot of people are going to make it seem like it was a good place, but it was like we were in jail," says Dupar, who spent three years with his family in Canadaville after Katrina destroyed their home in the Lower 9th Ward. "There was all these different types of rules. You couldn't have a gun on the premises. You had to go to the meetings. You had to do the community service. I'm not going to say Shane was a slave driver, but I wanted to bust him up a few times."

Still, Dupar, who before the storm was the chef at

a French Quarter restaurant, did well in Canadaville. He found a cooking job at a nursing home in Simmesport and did maintenance work around Canadaville. He also helped import some of the musical and culinary spirit of New Orleans to the countryside. “Everywhere we go, we make a party,” says Dupar. “We did roasts. We did briskets. We did gumbo. We boiled crawfish out back. We had DJs and music. We used to party from Friday all the way up until Monday.”

Eventually, Carmichael learned the pace of the place. For example, to entice residents to tend their gardens, he brought beer and music into the fields, transforming the tedious act of weeding into a group party. “That was a victory,” he says. The community was also safer than the neighborhoods where many of the residents came from. “We didn’t hear ambulances. We didn’t hear police cars. We didn’t hear gunshots. It was real nice and quiet,” says Dupar. “And the people in town were very friendly people.”

But not all Simmesport residents were friendly, and the meanest of them just might have been the mayor, a corpulent man named James “Boo” Fontenot. When Magna arrived, Fontenot saw dollar signs. He demanded the company buy him police cruisers, an upgraded sewer system and a sporting facility—and it did. But Fontenot also whipped the town into a frenzy of prejudice, publicly chastising Canadaville’s residents and promoting the unsubstantiated claim that their presence had increased crime. Folks from Simmesport became suspicious of their new neighbors.

Tonya Nelson, a native of the New Orleans area who had been living in coastal Mississippi and working with Oreck, the vacuum company, had evacuated to Houston. She heard about Canadaville from a longtime New Orleans friend, Jessica Thomas, and after passing the background check required for all residents, she moved to the settlement with her husband and four children. At a Christmas parade in downtown Simmesport, tensions between townspeople and Canadaville residents exploded. A mob of children attacked Nelson’s youngest son and nephew. “They stomped on them,” says Nelson. “My son was all messed up, and my nephew ruptured his spleen.”

“It was a very, very difficult transition for the kids,” she continues. “I remember I had to have the racism talk with my children. I had never had that before.” But in general, she says, frictions weren’t as much racial—Simmesport is 47 percent black, 52 percent white—as they were an issue of city versus country. “Quite honestly, there was a fear factor for folks from Simmesport,” says Carmichael, “when all they heard was talk of rape and pillage in the Superdome and the guns and gunfire that these people would be importing into their community.”

And then, perhaps, there was also contention because some were lucky enough to have received a new life from a Canadian corporation and others

were not so fortunate. “Canadaville was nice new homes,” says Nelson, “but the kids in Simmesport were basically living in shacks.”

• • •

‘A DRUG-ASS TOWN’

TO THIS DAY, Simmesport is tormented by tragic poverty. Prostitutes strut down side roads, drug dealers patrol tumbledown back neighborhoods, and numerous men are without jobs, or any prospect of getting them. “Man, this ain’t nothing but a drug-ass town,” one Chris Laneheart called out when asked what the community was like. “I sit on this porch every day, and you don’t see nothing but crack addicts and dope dealers. I wouldn’t want to raise my kids up in here.”

“This used to be a busy little town,” says Earl Adams, who with his wife runs a small clothing store across the highway called Granny’s Hope Chest. “You had hotels, a mechanic’s shop, several gas stations, four or five bars, six grocery stores, two or three barbershops, a sewing factory and a skating rink. You even had a theater.” But those times are long gone. “All the money people died off or the casino broke ’em or the Wal-Mart pushed ’em out,” says Adams. “As far as businesses, there is nothing here.”

Despite these difficulties, some residents of Canadaville did well. Nelson got a job as Carmichael’s assistant, even traveling with him to Toronto to speak to Magna executives about community needs. “I personally enjoyed being there,” she says. “To me, it really was a successful program, and a tremendous give-back to a community in need.... I will forever be grateful for what they did. I just thought he had a big heart to do something like that.”

By 2010, the original end of Magna’s commitment, even the big heart of Stronach was flagging. The worldwide economic recession had led to slumps in





+ JOB-POOR: Tom Maddie runs Maddie's Truck Plaza, one of the few thriving businesses in the area.

the auto industry, which meant the automobile parts business was also hurting. “We hit a huge downturn in the economy,” says Carmichael. “As a company, we had to be financially responsible to our shareholders, and making huge-risk investments in organic farming in Louisiana was not on the high end of the priority.”

Magna decided it had fulfilled its mandate and wound down the project. In November 2011, Stronach and the Magna Corporation donated the community to the Avoyelles Parish Port Commission. “It is not a bad thing to have a start and end

“THEY STOMPED ON THEM. MY SON WAS ALL MESSED UP, AND MY NEPHEW RUPTURED HIS SPLEEN.”

to a program,” says Carmichael, “but it was painful to tell residents that our mandate was ending and it was time to move out and go out into the real world.”

Most of the residents moved back to New Orleans to be near friends and family and find work, as there was more economic opportunity in the city. But some residents stayed on, like Jessica and Michael Thomas, paying rent to the Avoyelles Parish Port Commission.

A lack of long-term commitment is one reason why international development experts like Lisa Ann Richey remain extremely skeptical of corporate-funded development aid projects. “Corporations can never provide democratic accountability in a community because businesses are for-profit, that is why they exist, and their responsibilities are to their shareholders,” says Richey, who is director of the Doctoral School of Society and Globalization at Roskilde University in Denmark. “I am not a complete critic [nor am I] saying that corporate philanthropy can’t raise money quickly,” she adds. “But the problem with philanthropy is that it says people with a lot of power

and money can assert their will on other people.”

A variety of recent reports have shown that philanthropy is a field fraught with problems. In May, the Federal Trade Commission revealed that four cancer charities were run by members of the same extended family and had cheated \$187 million out of donors—only 3 percent of donations went toward helping cancer patients. And an investigation conducted by ProPublica and NPR earlier this year reported that the Red Cross had raised half a billion dollars in response to the devastating 2010 Haiti earthquake, and although the aid group had made housing a priority, five years later only six homes had been built.

As David Callahan, founder and editor of Inside Philosophy, a news site covering the nonprofit sector, recently noted in a *New York Times* op-ed, “Philanthropy, we are learning, is a world with too much secrecy and too little oversight.”

• • •

‘AREN’T SCARED OF THE STORMS’

THE COMMUNITY formerly known as Canadaville is still run by the Avoyelles Parish Port Commission. Only now the Thomas family has new neighbors. Homes have been made available to a select cast that includes the Simmesport town superintendent, the chief of police, employees of a local construction company that uses the port for shipping and a group of out-of-state construction workers who have been repairing a nearby bridge over the Atchafalaya River. Still, much of the neighborhood is deserted.

“We’re the last of the last,” says Michael Thomas, taking a drag from a cigarette and staring down his street of darkened homes and out into the night. But the couple aren’t planning on leaving. For one, they like the quiet of the country, and Katrina taught them a new reason to fear the city. “I don’t want to have to relocate every five or six years there is a storm,” says Jessica Thomas, who is inside cooking a crawfish dinner. “Being up on the road, trucking up, I don’t ever want to do that again.”

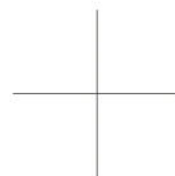
And if there is one thing that seems certain in southern Louisiana, it’s that there will be another storm.

Back in New Orleans, it’s a warm spring Sunday in the Lower 9th Ward, and former Canadaville residents Neal and Debra Dupar are doing what they know best—cooking up a pot of gumbo and throwing a party. Although the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina has reopened wounds and reminded residents of the risks of living below sea level near the hurricane-prone Gulf, the Dupars don’t plan on leaving. “We aren’t scared of the storms,” says Neal. “This is our home.” But not all memories of Canadaville are bitter ones. As Debra dishes out bowls of gumbo, she reminisces about her time in the country. “The organic vegetables there were bigger,” she says with a smile, “and the chickens tasted better!” **N**





NEW WORLD



SOFTWARE

ALCOHOL

SPACE

ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH

INNOVATION

GOOD SCIENCE

STUD SUDS

Building the better cheap beer, via the path of yeast resistance

+
AT LAGER HEADS:
New yeast strains
will lead to beer
that tastes better
and can be pro-
duced faster.

BEER HAS undergone a revolution. Breweries worldwide now make extravagantly flavorful beers with equally excessive names like Hell or High Watermelon and Arrogant Bastard. From IPAs and Belgian wheats to imperial stouts and London porters, it seems every beer has had its moment—except for the lowly lager, the most popular beer in America, with Bud Light and Coors Light leading the way. They dominate sales, but they’ve always been shunned by the beer community. That’s all about to change.

Researchers at the VTT Technical Research Center of Finland have discovered a new strain of yeast that allows brewers to change the recipe for lagers. Traditionally fermented and conditioned at low temperatures, lagers are made with a cold-hardy yeast species *Saccharomyces pastorianus*. It’s why Bud and Coors taste so much better cold (or, at least, are marketed that way).

For a while, researchers have known that *S. pastorianus* is a hybrid of two species. In the 1980s, scientists discovered that its first parent was *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. The second, *Saccharomyces*

eubayanus, was discovered growing wild in Patagonia in 2011. “Once *eubayanus* was discovered, things suddenly became very interesting,” says Brian Gibson, who studies yeasts at VTT. Gibson and his team just announced their hybrid of *S. cerevisiae* and *S. eubayanus* that they believe will lead to better-tasting lagers that can be produced faster and with higher alcohol concentrations.

The first lagers they made have a “clovey aroma,” he says, reminiscent of a German wheat beer. But that’s just a start. Gibson says building a wide variety of flavors is easy. Chances are that there will soon be more flavorful lagers in stores. Gibson can’t yet say which beer-makers will be involved, but says there has been interest from international and domestic breweries. His team is also “currently investigating the application of hybrid strains for cider and wine fermentation.”

Then there’s another project that could be even more exciting. Gibson’s team is now turning the focus to making new yeast matchups that could create lower-calorie beers that will taste as good as anything you can get on tap. **N**

BY

STEVE SMITH

[@realsteve_smith](#)



DISRUPTIVE

HIRE AND HIGHER

Tech is about to take the work out of finding your perfect job

FOR TOO LONG, we've had to "find a job." It's about time the right jobs found us.

Most of us generate so much data as we use Facebook, LinkedIn and smartphone apps that software can already rummage through our likes, endorsements and transactions and put together a staggeringly accurate personality portrait. At the same time, a bunch of tech companies in the human resources space are working on ways to use data to truly understand the nuances of a particular job at a particular company.

If data can understand the job and also intimately know all the potential candidates for that job, software should be able to make a great match, saving everybody a lot of agony. A little software agent for the open job might show up on your smartphone screen like a prince holding a glass slipper that fits only you. Maybe it will play the "Hallelujah Chorus" as the perfect job is presented, ensuring that you and your prospective employer will live happily ever after.

We're getting there a little at a time. For much of the population, searching for a job is still a hunt-and-peck kind of chore. You look through listings and send résumés into black holes. Maybe you're lucky and hear about a job through someone you know. You waste hours in the interview process, answering bizarre queries like, "If you were asked to unload a 747 full of jelly beans, what would you do?"—an actual interview question reportedly asked of a candidate at Bose.

(Note: This column does not apply to the small slice of workers who possess a red-hot

skill. A Python coder's experience in the job market is more like that of the only bartender on a fraternity-themed cruise ship.)

Over the past 25 years, technology has brought about significant changes in the job-finding milieu. In the 1990s, job listings went online on sites like Monster.com, making them searchable and global. In the 2000s, LinkedIn crashed the scene, becoming the world's repository for résumés and professional contacts. So now when you're unemployed, you can easily find out where all your friends work.

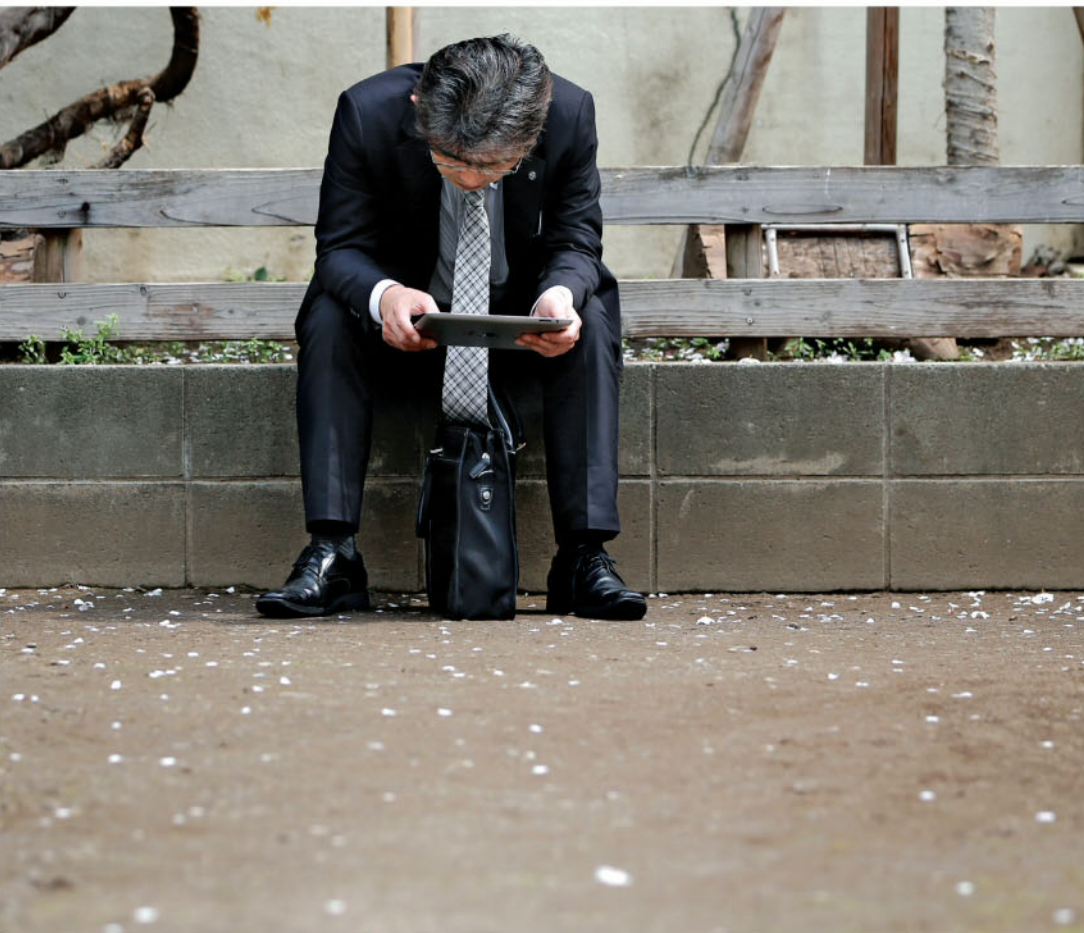
If each decade turns the crank in an important way, we're due for another revolution in the job-search field. At a human resources conference last month called Destination Talent, conversation centered on two pervasive problems today's technology needs to fix. One is reducing the time it takes to fill a job. The other is about finding precisely the right fit between a person and a job, so great employees stay longer and feel more engaged. Online listings and LinkedIn have made it easy for employers to find loads of potential candidates—but HR folks would rather see fewer, better candidates.

At the other end, job hunters would love to apply for only jobs that are exact fits so the probability of getting hired will be very high—and time wasted very low.

We're seeing early versions of how this might play out. EmployInsight, founded in 2012, is using data to understand intangible traits such as curiosity, levelheadedness or self-motivation

BY
KEVIN MANEY
[@kmaney](#)





+
**THE TRIALS OF
 JOB:** There are
 massive ineffi-
 ciencies in the job
 market that keep
 skilled workers
 sidelined and
 cost companies
 millions.

that fit with a company's culture and are highly valued for a specific job within it. Then the system can help sort for the kind of personality that might best fit an open job, instead of just matching a particular skill set. Other companies are circling around similar ideas. Aon, the U.K. insurance and human resources giant, put out an app called Mood Ring that lets employees quickly register how they feel about their jobs at any given moment—another path to understanding the culture of the company that's hiring. Pomello, a startup out of Y Combinator, gathers data about teams inside companies so employers can find new employees well-suited to work with that team.

So far with such technologies, candidates have to take a test to see if there's a match. But as researchers and lenders are discovering, data from a Facebook profile can pinpoint a personality better than a human assessor. It's not much of a leap to deploy software like EmployInsight's to analyze Facebook to find personality fits. And LinkedIn has the professional data that might be missing from Facebook—so if EmployInsight-type software

could look at both, it should be able to find people who have the right job history and are the right cultural fit for every opening.

One big player, Glassdoor, is something of a manual way to bring better fits to the job-hunting game. Glassdoor's reviews help guide people to cultures where they might click. "We can help reduce 'bad fit' turnover, [and] that ultimately contributes to greater productivity and a stronger economy," CEO Robert Hohman told *Fast Company*. In fact, Hohman is onto the big payoff here.

Software that matches the perfect job to the perfect candidate would squeeze the huge inefficiency of job searches out of the economy. The U.S. Labor Department puts the number of unemployed at 8.3 million and the number of jobs open at 4.5 million. Surely a significant number of those

unemployed just aren't seeing the jobs they could and should fill, while many employers struggle to uncover great candidates.

The costs to the economy are enormous when people remain unemployed or muddle through their days in jobs they hate. Polls show only 30 percent of employees are fully engaged at work.

A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THE UNEMPLOYED JUST AREN'T SEEING THE JOBS THEY COULD FILL.

Raise that to even 50 percent, and it would be like putting the economy on meth. Solve the problem of it taking too long to put the right people in the right jobs, and a whole lot of us will be happier and richer.

Unless, of course, robots take all our jobs. Then HR robots will just use the software to hire other robots, and the rest of us can oil their servos. **N**



THE PLUTO FLYBY DIDN'T HAPPEN

Get ready for the latest hot space conspiracy theory: 'Pluto Truthers' claim NASA is faking it

FOR NINE long years, scientists at NASA, Johns Hopkins University and the Southwest Research Institute waited for their piano-sized New Horizons space probe to pass by Pluto. It finally reached the dwarf planet last month and beamed photos back to Earth from billions of miles away. The stunning images captivated the scientific community, revealing ice mountains, frozen tundras and other never-before-seen details on Pluto's surface. Stunning, that is, if the scientists are telling the truth.

There's a small but vocal group of conspiracists—bloggers have taken to calling them "Pluto Truthers"—who claim the recent images are fake. In fact, they argue, New Horizons is simply the latest bogus galactic mission to deceive the public, perhaps to divert tax money to more secretive or nefarious government projects. That trickery is nothing new, they charge; it goes all the way back to the first moon landing.

Initial close-up images of Pluto came to Earth days before the flyby, prompting a San Diego man, who goes by Crrrow777 on YouTube, to post a video about why he thought the images were fake. He argued that photos he'd taken of Jupiter with his telescopic camera from 484 million miles away were of a better quality than NASA's shots of Pluto from a distance of only a few million miles.

"This is silliness and games, and they are literally robbing the American people and then lying to them," he says in the video, adding that

the space probe is "probably sitting in a Burbank, Hollywood, soundstage somewhere." He concludes, "If you want to see the real Pluto, I'm sorry to say, you've got to go to Disneyland."

The seven-and-a-half-minute clip has garnered more than 90,000 views. (His channel, which also features videos about last year's Rosetta comet landing and UFOs crossing the moon's surface, has more than 4.8 million total views and 43,000 subscribers.) In a follow-up to the Pluto video, he uses Photoshop to invert the colors and boost levels on NASA's Pluto image to show what he calls a "ghost image" of "artifacts" around the dwarf planet. On his image of the moon, by comparison, there are no artifacts.

"This is a constructed image. That's really all there is to it," he says of NASA's photograph. "There is no spacecraft out there. What we know of Pluto is that it is a very, very dim light in the sky. That is all we know of Pluto."

Crrrow777 isn't the only one calling it baloney. Kedrick Blessed (real name), a 30-year-old computer engineer in California, says he grew up wanting to be an astronaut—until he stopped believing that NASA had the technology to go into space. "Anybody can go on the computer and create those," he says of the Pluto images. "There's no radiation lines.... There's no stars." NASA claims to do missions such as New Horizons, he says, only to build popularity for the agency.

Justin Shaw of Lethbridge, Alberta, says there

BY
MAX KUTNER
@maxkutner



HAL TO PAY:
The long tradition
of space flight
skeptics goes back
to claims that
the moon landing
was staged and
directed by
Stanley Kubrick.

is no doubt in his mind that the flyby images are computer-generated. “The whole mission is fallacious. There’s no authenticity to this at all,” he says. “People don’t think twice about it.” He adds, “I’m not sure what their motive would be to be faking it, other than deception. We have a lot of tax money that’s disappearing for who knows what reason.”

Like other Pluto Truthers—a term he says he dislikes—Shaw is skeptical of the entire space program, not just New Horizons. His theory goes: If space is a vacuum, how could spacecraft traverse it? And if it is not a vacuum, it’s probably full of debris, and why would governments waste money sending people and high-tech gear into that sort of danger zone? But before people can consider those questions, Shaw says, they must rethink even basic teachings, such as whether the Earth is round and in rotation. “I’m tired of the lies and the deception that they’re playing against us,” he says.

Then there are *Truther* Truthers. Richard Hoagland, a former NASA consultant and co-author of the 2007 *New York Times* best-seller *Dark Mission: The Secret History of NASA*, believes that people like Crrow777 are NASA plants hired to

“IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE
REAL PLUTO, YOU’VE GOT
TO GO TO DISNEYLAND.”

keep the public from looking too closely at the Pluto images and seeing what they reveal: evidence of alien life. The Pluto Truther movement, he says, is “like a political counterforce designed to confuse people...to get people who are taking these images seriously and looking at them to basically dismiss what’s on them.”

Hoagland, whom one space skeptic calls “the granddaddy of the whole space ‘Truther’ thing,” believes that NASA’s imagery of Pluto, Mars and the moon shows geometric patterns that are actually the ruins of extraterrestrial civilizations. The only reason the public isn’t freaking out about the evidence, he says, is that the government has not announced it yet. He points to a 1960 document, known as the Brookings Report, that NASA commissioned. It recommends the agency consider withholding information about alien life from the public to avoid a panic.



"They are really, really terrified that societal fabric will unravel," Hoagland says. Eventually, when it deems us ready, NASA will point out what the Pluto images truly show. "Those are not mountains. Those are not craters. Those are geometric, manufactured things left by somebody in an amazingly well-preserved state."

Congress formed NASA in 1958, and mistrust of the agency soon followed. (Some people quip it stands for Never a Straight Answer.) Space conspiracies run the gamut, from the belief that all astronauts are actors and that humans have never really space-traveled to claims of UFO sightings and government cover-ups. According to a 1999 Gallup poll, 6 percent of Americans believe the government faked the Apollo moon landing ("That's one small step for a man..."), perhaps to help the U.S. win the Cold War. Others believe Stanley Kubrick directed Neil Armstrong's giant leap on a film set. (The critically acclaimed 2012 documentary *Room 237* is, in part, about how Kubrick's *The Shining* is filled with clues about this cover-up.) Conspiracy videos about the Mars Pathfinder and the Mars Curiosity rover, robotic spacecraft that, according to NASA, landed on Mars in 1997 and 2012, respectively, have millions of views on YouTube.

Still, the skeptics remain in the minority. According to the Pew Research Center, 73 percent of Americans viewed NASA favorably in 2013. (Only 22 percent now view Congress that way, Pew says.) In 2014, nearly a quarter of Americans felt the government was spending too little on space exploration, the highest percentage of any year since the General Social Survey first posed the question in 1973.

That might be why the Pluto Truthers experience so much backlash. Crows777 says he has become a target, and for that reason he asked *Newsweek* to not print his real name. "People would be surprised to learn just how much anger and hatred are leveled against people for simply making video clips with a different point of view," he says. He's been "stunned at the level of malice. Even people who said they lived in my area and

would find me—and all because of video clips."

Psychologists have studied what makes conspiracists tick. Stephan Lewandowsky, a cognitive scientist at England's University of Bristol who published a paper about "conspiracist ideation" in *Psychological Science*, told Salon in 2013 that individuals believe such theories because "it gives people a sense of control" over "randomness." In his research, Lewandowsky found that conspiracy theories tend not to exist in isolation—someone who doubts the moon landing may also believe the FBI killed Martin Luther King Jr., for example—and that theories can even influence people who don't believe them. As he and his co-authors point out in their article, "The spread of conspiracy theories about the alleged risks from vaccinations has been linked to reduced vaccination rates."

Lewandowsky has also noted why it's so hard to get through to conspiracy theorists—they often claim that evidence contrary to theirs only further demonstrates that a conspiracy exists. Psychologists call that logic a "self-sealing

"THEY ARE REALLY, REALLY TERRIFIED THAT SOCIETAL FABRIC WILL UNRAVEL."

nature of reasoning." Maybe that's why, despite being overwhelmingly outnumbered, the Pluto Truthers feel a momentum gathering.

"We live in an age of power and deception," says Crows777. "I do see a difference in the number of people who are no longer blind to this fact. An awakening is, in fact, under way in this regard."

Scientists don't seem too concerned with the so-called awakening. Representatives for New Horizons and three separate astrophysicists wouldn't agree to discuss Pluto Truthers. Jonathan McDowell, an astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, says. "It's difficult to respond in detail to statements that make no sense."

"This is a tiny group of fringe people who no one would have ever heard of if it weren't for the Internet," says Phil Plait, an astronomer who has worked with NASA and runs Bad Astronomy, a website that debunks space-related misconceptions. "There are probably just as many people who think cats don't exist."

Of course, it's possible that those responses are just another part of the cover-up. **N**

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a gorilla's face, focusing on its eye and nose. The gorilla's fur is dark and textured, and its eye is a striking yellowish-brown color. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of its face.

HELP SAVE THE 'WOW'

These giants of the animal kingdom need help. Despite their strength and cunning they're no match for a poacher's rifle. For 50 years WWF has been securing protected areas worldwide, but these aren't enough to stop the killing. To disrupt the sophisticated criminal gangs supplying animal parts to lucrative illegal markets, we are working with governments to toughen law enforcement. We're also working with consumers to reduce the demand for unlawful wildlife products. Help us look after the world where you live at panda.org/50





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STOP TRAFFIC:
A commuter ad-
mires model Bella
Nabiyah's corpo-
real canvas, part
of a Times Square
exhibit by the
infamous New York
body-painter Andy
Golub. He has been
painting bodies
for nine years.



DOWNTIME

MOVIES

ART

TELEVISION

LOVE

MUSIC

BOOKS

START SPREADING THE NUDES

Why is everyone in New York getting naked for Andy Golub?

CLAD IN jeans and an intricately patterned blue shirt, Andy Golub is onstage at the tiny Gene Frankel Theatre in Manhattan, painting. Seventies folk music floats from the stereo. There's a murmur of fans and photographers scattered around the seats. And Golub's canvas is a living, breathing (though, to her credit, not really moving) art student named Dylan.

Golub, 49, is New York's most prolific body painter, and Dylan is one of his favorite models. "Every time I've painted Dylan I got a good painting," he says from the stage. Silent and expressionless, Dylan is nude except for a pair of black pants. Golub paints a yellow dagger down the center of her torso, black branches across her face, blue circles over her breasts.

It's a little like watching PBS maestro Bob Ross chip away at a snowy mountain, except every so often the canvas exhales and you're reminded that she is a human being. Then the remaining clothes come off and, within an hour and a half, Dylan's nude figure is a gleaming wonderland of weaving stripes and colors.

Golub is one of New York City's few painters to have been arrested—at least recently—for his work. It's not what he paints that offends; it's what he paints *on*: people. Naked people, of any gender or body type. And in public too—Columbus Circle, Times Square, wherever. If you're daring enough to strip, he'll turn your bare human form into a psychedelic canvas of painted patterns.

Golub's eccentric public presence and persona have catapulted him toward fringe-level New York City icon status. But his work disappears down the drain when the model steps in the shower.

"The idea of it being transitory—I think it is a neat sort of element that you don't get with art so much," Golub says.

Golub didn't invent this medium. From ancient tribes in Asia and Africa (where humans are believed to have adorned their bodies with mud images of gods and war) to the 1933 Chicago World's Fair (where inventor and cosmetics kingpin Max Factor Sr. was arrested for decorating burlesque dancer and actress Sally Rand in movie makeup), body-painting has a long



history. The art form hit the mainstream with a 1992 *Vanity Fair* cover starring Demi Moore in a painted-on suit; by 2000, body paint had become a regular feature in *Sports Illustrated*'s annual Swimsuit Issue.

The difference is that Golub isn't satisfied with art fair exhibitions and photo shoots behind closed doors. He likes to bring his work—and his NSFW process—into public venues. In mid-July, he hosted the second annual NYC Bodypainting Day, a convergence of 100 fully nude models and 75 painters in midtown Manhattan. Afterward, Golub led a naked march to the United Nations building. One veteran model, Abbey Jasmine Watt, said she was there for activist reasons. "I believe that nudity and sexuality don't have to go hand in hand," she said, wearing nothing but paint and moccasins.

"When I'm out in public, in Times Square or whatever, it's this confusing thing to people," Golub says. "They're so not used to seeing it that they need someone to say it and confirm it. People come up, and they're like, 'What's this for?' And I'm like, 'It's public art!'"

Golub started out as a business major and art minor before flunking an important business

test and deciding to major in his minor. He spent some years teaching art in the public school system, and later he became fascinated with painting unconventional objects: rocks, shoes, tables, cars. When he tried painting a mannequin, he realized that bodies made for pretty good canvases. He mentioned the idea to a friend at Artexpo New York in 2006 and got connected to some models.

"I remember just seeing my art walking around was this weird experience," Golub recalls. "It made me feel like I should do more of it."

He did, and things escalated quickly to painting in public. Painting fully nude models. Painting fully nude models in public. Painting a *lot* of fully nude models in public.

Then came the heat. Golub has spent more time than anybody fighting for the right to paint naked models in New York. Public nudity is legal in the city, as long as it's part of "a performance, exhibition or show." But in 2011, he and two models were arrested. Another model, Zoë West, was arrested that summer. Civil liberties attorney Ron Kuby took on Golub's fight pro bono and won. "I knew I was in the right," Golub says, but when the charges against him were dismissed, the condition was that he and his models would

+
FREE FORMS:
Though he's no stranger to legal run-ins because of his chosen medium, Golub's work is protected under New York law, which allows body-painting as long as it's part of "a performance, exhibition or show."



be arrested again if he tried painting fully nude models during the daytime. The implication that his work wasn't fit for children's eyes irked him.

So Golub reached out to the New York Civil Liberties Union, which contacted the city. New York officials conceded that Golub can legally paint naked men and women in public any time of day. (Three caveats: He can't do it in front of a Toys R Us; he has to announce where and when it's happening in advance; and his models are required to leave their underwear on until right before that area is painted.)

The artist celebrated by securing a permit from the parks department and planning the first NYC Bodypainting Day, in 2014. He's still harassed by the police sometimes, but the cops in Times Square recognize him, and Golub is tired of fighting. He just wants to paint.

NAKED AND HANDCUFFED

So what's it like to strip and get painted? And why is Golub flooded with volunteers?

Every model is different. "You can feel people who are positive and people who are negative," he says. There are times when he can tell the subject isn't in the right state of mind. Some are more interested in a sexual experience than an artistic one, others a little too into the attention.

For the model, results may vary. The experience could be a life-changing shot of body confidence, maybe a stimulating new hobby or secret pastime. At worst you could outrage your parents, get paint on your new sheets—maybe wind up naked in a police precinct.

So went the adventure of West, a professional model who has plenty of experience striking nude poses. There were cops on the scene the whole time she was painted in midtown Manhattan in 2011. They stood by when West removed her black G-string but pounced after Golub's work was finished, hauling her, naked, into a police van.

West remembers being handcuffed to a bench in the juvenile delinquents room for about 20 minutes before being handed some clothes. Her thought process: "How did I get here? How is this my life?" She laughs about it now. "It was nerve-racking, but I knew that I was [legally] protected," she says. Golub had warned her that an arrest was possible, but he assured her the charges would be dropped, which they were. As a bonus, West's ordeal blew up the tabloids and later landed her a nice payout from the city. If West were pursuing a career in, say, investment



banking, those Google results might have been a problem. But she was thinking about pursuing modeling full time, and the publicity was the boost she needed.

For others, the rewards are more personal than professional. Golub has worked with models of widely varying physical shapes and health conditions. Several years ago, he visited a hospital to paint Fredi Grieshaber, a 65-year-old woman with Stage IV metastatic breast cancer. She died two months later. In a video capturing the moment, Grieshaber cries and says she's "going out with a bang," as Golub's paint livens up the hospital-gray setting.

Kiki Alston-Owens, a 41-year-old woman from Staten Island, says the joy of being painted has helped her to cope with depression after losing nine children. (Doctors still don't know what occurred during her pregnancies, or after, to cause her babies to die.) "When I'm out there,

POLICE POUNCED ON WEST AFTER GOLUB'S WORK WAS FINISHED, HAULING HER, NAKED, INTO A VAN.

the paint becomes a barrier from the hurt, the pain, the sadness, the stress, everything that may be going on in my life," she says. "Once that paint is on, it's like a whole new me. It's like everything is absorbed in the paint."

Alston-Owens put on weight after her losses and now weighs around 250 pounds. She finds it empowering to be a plus-sized model in public venues. "[Body-painting] helped me to start seeing that even though my children aren't here, there's still beauty in me. That this weight, this stomach, these sagging breasts are not something that someone else will look at and say, 'That's obesity. That's nasty.' This is my story of survival. There's a message behind all of this fat. There is a survival struggle." **N**



I DO...AND I DO...AND I DO AGAIN

Why do Pieter Langendijk and Marcella van Huisstede get married in a new city every year?

THE FIRST time Pieter Langendijk and Marcella van Huisstede got married, the ceremony took place at Burning Man, in Nevada's Black Rock Desert, 5,200 miles away from their home in the Netherlands. There was no white dress, no parents, no drunken uncles, no vows. The bride wore a black crop-top, veil and tulle skirt. She used a wood-veined parasol to block the sun. The groom donned a white linen shirt and pants, black sunglasses and a turban.

Marcella's parents weren't pleased. Not only was their daughter marrying a man 20 years her senior, but they wouldn't be there to witness it. Not to worry, she told them. We'll get married again next year too. And the year after that. And the year after that.

Pieter and Marcella made this decision not long after he proposed to her, in 2010. Years before that, they'd separately come to the conclusion that conventions are meant to be ignored; both swear that they painted "Fuck the System" on their bedroom walls at age 13. They wanted to get married, but their way. "I told him I think it'd be nice to go and marry between dolphins," she says. "Or in Thailand; at a festival; in the bathtub." And he said, "Let's do that."

So in 2011, the two made a pact: We'll marry every year, in a different place. Wedding No. 2 was in Zanzibar, in 2014. And on August 15 they did it in Amsterdam, in front of all their friends and family. There was a garden, a

teepee, a tree house and a campfire. This time, Marcella's parents got to watch. Next time, maybe not.

MY BOYFRIEND HAS TO OWN A PHONE

Marcella grew up in the rolling hills of rural Holland, in a small village. She studied hospitality in school and, at 19, landed an internship at a hotel in Amsterdam. Not long after she started, though, her mom was diagnosed with cancer, and the two moved to Amsterdam so her mom could get treatment at a hospital that happened to be near a little waterfront café called Langendijk. She and her mother stopped in for a meal. The café was beautiful and sunlit, and Marcella got to thinking: *Wouldn't it be nice if my internship were here? I could visit her every day.* She walked in and asked for a job. She got one.

The owner of the café was Pieter Langendijk. When they first met, Marcella wasn't interested. She was convinced Pieter was gay, because he was so affectionate with the café's manager. Plus, she had a boyfriend.

Pieter wasn't gay; he had a girlfriend, and when they broke up, he quickly turned his focus to Marcella. He wooed her with little notes left around the restaurant: "I like you" or "Hey you again." They made her smile. She told her boyfriend she was falling for a guy at work. Then she confessed she was in love with him. A week later, Pieter and Marcella moved in together.

BY
WINSTON ROSS
[@winston_ross](#)



ROMANCE AND THE ROAD: For Marcella and Pieter, who have gotten married at Burning Man, in Zanzibar and in Amsterdam, marriage is about reaffirming their commitment to each other.

She was 20. He was 40.

Because of their age gap, most of Pieter's and Marcella's friends were skeptical. But Pieter became increasingly convinced he had finally found the right person for him. He had been through plenty of relationships, and he had a very specific idea of what he wanted in a woman: friendly, intelligent, sporty, empathetic; someone who valued independence and liked sex. "She had all those things and at a very young age," he says.

Marcella had a list too. Her future husband had to cook. He had to have a phone ("My first boyfriend had no phone"). He couldn't be a soccer fanatic or a country dancer. And whoever it was, he had to marry her by age 25. By the time she met Pieter, 180 requirements were on Marcella's list. (One day, they went through them all, one by one, with red and green markers. Pieter met 153 of her conditions.)

"I TOLD HIM I THINK IT'D BE NICE TO MARRY BETWEEN DOLPHINS. OR IN THAILAND."

Age gap or no, Pieter and Marcella came to believe they were right for each other. "Every relationship I've had got better and better," Pieter says. "But what I experienced right from the start with Marcella was this feeling that this couldn't get better anymore."

BETROTHED AT BURNING MAN

It wasn't always bliss. Weeks after they started dating, Pieter and Marcella went on a skiing



holiday in Austria. Pieter had no interest in snowboarding, but she talked him into trying it. He struggled through the first day of lessons, then decided to employ a technique called neuro-linguistic programming; it involves saying something loudly to wire the brain's neurons and accelerate learning. Which is to say he spent the day on the slopes screaming at himself. "Everyone was looking at him, like this guy is crazy," she says. "I didn't want to be with him anymore. If we were in Amsterdam, I would have left."

A few months later, they went on another holiday, this time to Greece, at the invitation of one of Pieter's friends, who lived in a van on the beach. The quarters were close. Pieter's pal snored. The couple had to sleep on skinny, separate mattresses in the van. At night, they held hands across the gap.

Pieter had brought a ring with him. One day, he and Marcella were walking on the beach. He was going to run back to the van to grab a couple of beers, he said. He came back with the ring and a proposal. Marcella said yes. The band was way too big for her, but she kept it on day and night, crooking her finger as they swam in the Aegean Sea to keep it from falling off.

It was Pieter who suggested Burning Man for the first wedding. He'd been to the counterculture festival the year before, and it seemed like a "fantastic" place for nonconformist nuptials. He knew a Dutch artist named Dadara who was planning to travel to Nevada and display a giant, gold thumbs-up button for a Facebook-inspired piece he called *Like for Real*. Pieter got permission to have the ceremony on the like button, using the thumbs-up as an altar. The couple asked Dadara to officiate and invited two close friends from the Netherlands. As a sandstorm approached, Pieter and Marcella exchanged their vows. "You can take the blue like and stay in reality—nothing changes and you can believe whatever you like, it's very safe. Or you can take the red like..." the minister said, but the howling wind drowned out the rest of his ceremony. The couple chose red. They downed shots of tequila and glasses of champagne. A Venetian gondola on wheels pulled up. Pieter and Marcella rode off into the distance, on a "honey sail."

Later that night, they set the thumb on fire.

'HER SHIRT WAS SOAKED IN BLOOD'

A few months after Pieter and Marcella returned from Nevada in 2013, they went to Zanzibar to escape Amsterdam's gloomy winter. They rented a car, stayed at a local resort and decided to venture out to a romantic restaurant one night, careening down an unlit highway in Africa. As they neared the village of Stone Town, a car approached in the other direction, flashing his lights at them again and again, blinding Pieter and Marcella.

By the time Pieter slowed down, it was too late to avoid the broken-down truck in their lane. Its lights were out. There were no reflectors. The vehicle was just a ghost in the middle of the road, and Pieter and Marcella's car slammed into it at 40 miles an hour. Marcella's neck was sliced open from a wound Pieter says stretched from her chin to the top of her spine. He could have stuck his fist in the opening. There were no ambulances. They had no idea how to find the nearest hospital.

Pieter crawled out of the car; he pulled Marcella out as well. He told her to tilt her head toward her shoulder to keep the wound closed. He begged her to stay awake. A van stopped. Pieter ran to it. "You're going to bring us to the hospital," he barked at the driver. A girl inside the van spoke Swahili and English and had a phone. "Please come with us," Pieter said. "I need you to make

"HE SPENT THE DAY ON THE SLOPES SCREAMING TO HIMSELF."

phone calls." He loaded Marcella into the van and ran back to his totaled rental. He grabbed the locks of Marcella's strawberry blond hair, lopped off in the wreck. "Don't ask me why," he says.

The nearest hospital was 90 minutes away. Pieter held Marcella's head in place the whole time, talking to her, keeping her conscious. He used the telephone to ask the manager to help find a surgeon. "It was a hell drive," he says. Marcella knew she was near death. Just staying awake, she says, "was like a marathon for me." She spit blood and glass out of her mouth.

Pieter and Marcella arrived at the hospital. He lifted her into a broken wheelchair, hurried past homeless people sleeping in the hallway and laid her down on a bed with no sheets. The doctor prepared the operating room and admin-



TRIPLE KNOT: After tying the knot at Burning Man (top left), the pair's second wedding took place in Zanzibar (bottom right), where Marcella narrowly had survived a car crash two years prior.

istered anesthesia. Marcella screamed as she passed out, certain she was dying. The doctor cleaned her massive wound and sewed her back together. Pieter stayed awake that night, batting cockroaches away from his sleeping wife.

A GRAND BOHEMIAN AFFAIR

Marcella spent the next two years in recovery. Nightmares haunted her dreams. For closure, the pair decided to go back to Africa in 2014, for their second wedding.

Pieter emailed the owner of the Zanzibar resort, and he happily agreed to host a ceremony. They studied the local customs and invited the villagers and the people from the hospital who'd helped them after the crash. Pieter and Marcella were married on a beach this time. Marcella wore green-and-black print tribal robes. Henna tattoos covered her arms and legs. A thick scar ran down her neck. The next day, they left to go on a weeklong safari.

On August 15, wedding No. 3 took place in Amsterdam. Pieter and Marcella were married standing atop hay bales. Two hundred guests were invited. There was champagne and cocktails plus American barbecue and wood-fired pizza.

After that, who knows? Indonesia is on their list. Marcella dreams of a ceremony beneath the northern lights. Pieter wants at least one wedding with "just the two of us." They could get married on an airplane and then jump out of it. But there are no clear plans at this point, he says. "We just want to be really open."

Sometimes friends or family members question their annual renewal of vows. Will the magic fade with each ceremony? Pieter and Marcella say those questions miss the point. Marriage is about emphasizing that you've made a lifelong commitment; re-emphasizing that commitment each year can only make it stronger. "The year you don't want to get married anymore," Pieter says, "you need to talk." **N**



BARBARIANS AT THE BANK

Don't want your babies to grow up to be Wall Streeters? Don't let them read *Straight to Hell*

BY NOW, the Wall Street exposé is practically a literary genre. Its latest entry is the long-awaited contribution of John LeFevre, author of the popular parody Twitter account @GSElevator. Warning: It's not a cautionary tale.

"I didn't have a clear agenda other than to write an entertaining book," LeFevre says of *Straight to Hell: True Tales of Deviance, Debauchery, and Billion-Dollar Deals*. "But I didn't want to be totally lacking in substance. Hopefully, it achieved combining some crazy stories and also touching on some tough issues."

LeFevre was a Salomon Brothers intern in 1998, the summer after his freshman year of college. During a long career that saw him working for Citigroup in New York, London and Hong Kong, he created @gselevator to poke fun at Wall Street culture. The idea behind the joke account was to post fake quotes "overheard" in the elevator at Goldman Sachs. (He never worked for Goldman Sachs.) Tweets indicative of the account's general flavor include "My garbage disposal eats better than 99% of the world" and "If your bachelor party revolves around a big steak dinner and a strip club, count me out. I did that last night."

"The Twitter account is very clearly designed to make fun of a culture," LeFevre tells *Newsweek*. In contrast, the book is more about exposing it. Through a conversational, episodic first-person narrative, LeFevre traces his career in finance. The hardest part for readers may be

sympathizing with the funny, self-aware voice of someone who clearly enjoyed partaking in the culture he dissects. "I loved working," he says. "I carried the culture forward."

Still, LeFevre says, he began to resent the financiers who took themselves too seriously. The perception that finance is a "meritocracy" also bothered him. One passage of the book describes the hiring process for new analysts:

"So, who is his [or her] father?" was the first question, unless she was hot, then it was, "Is she single?"

The book's stories—LeFevre says he began taking notes as an analyst in training—will be familiar to fans of the Wall Street genre: extravagant expenditures, offensive jokes told by bosses, overt sexism, sex, prostitution, drug use and drinking, collusion and manipulation of clients. One troubling exchange involves a young hireling called "Justin." LeFevre's trading desk team gives him the following assignment: Survey the men on the floor and create a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the results. "Here's the survey question you are going to answer for me. There are five women in the credit sales team. Rank them in the order of most fuckable." Justin performs "admirably," and LeFevre writes, "I feel like a proud father; the torch has been passed."

To many readers, the details of billion-dollar deals LeFevre helped broker are bound to be an



BY
JACK MARTINEZ
[@jlm_mt](https://twitter.com/jlm_mt)

afterthought: He's clearly not trying to teach a class on Securities and Exchange Commission regulations. Still, while he knows his tales of sex, drugs and sick pranks will only confirm what many people already think they know about Wall Street, LeFevre wanted to make sure his book wasn't completely devoid of morality. "[Readers] do seem to get a little bit caught up in this bankers-behaving-badly stuff," he says. "Hopefully, they will see the substance [in the book].... There are some systemic conflicts of interest in the way that bonds get allocated in every single bank, every single day."

LeFevre says he left the world of finance for self-preservation: "I began to have more bad days than good days." So he turned to a different pleasure—writing—and moved to a suburb near Houston.

THE MONSTERS ARE HUMAN

The Wall Street takedown has existed in some form since the 19th century, when Herman Melville wrote "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street." Melville's classic tale is about a scribe

in a legal office, not a financier, but it offers one of literature's most enduring takes on the white-collar culture emerging at the time. The big screen has sustained the genre, through movies such as *Wall Street*, best remembered for popularizing the Gordon Gekko phrase "Greed is good."

But for LeFevre and many others, Michael Lewis's *Liar's Poker* was the book that got them hooked on Wall Street. Published in 1990, *Liar's Poker* outed the culture of Salomon Brothers, where Lewis had worked as a young Princeton graduate in the 1980s. The book was noteworthy for addressing substantial criminal activities and exposing the personal habits of finance's self-proclaimed "big swinging dicks."

In an article he wrote for *Portfolio*, Lewis said, "Six months after *Liar's Poker* was published, I was knee-deep in letters from students...who wanted to know if I had any other secrets to share about Wall Street. They'd read my book as a how-to manual." Lewis had hoped the book would discourage young graduates from entering the field. Instead, it was the inspiration for a generation of bankers, some of whom nearly blew up the global economy in 2008.

Statistics from the 2010s suggest that college graduates from elite schools, especially the Ivy League, are still flocking to finance. Finance claimed 36 percent of 2011 grads from Princeton,

THE CUBS OF WALL STREET: John LeFevre's *Straight to Hell* recounts the author's debaucherous days on Wall Street—though he hopes his readers won't use it as a how-to guide.

SEAN MURPHY/GETTY



"MY GARBAGE DISPOSAL EATS BETTER THAN 99% OF THE WORLD."

while nearly half of Harvard's graduating class of 2010 went into finance or management consulting at such firms as Bain Capital. "People have a short memory about the [financial] crisis," LeFevre says. "Wall Street is still very prestigious."

Like Lewis, LeFevre gets solicited for career advice. "People tweet at @GSElevator asking me how they can get into finance." He calls them "aspirational readers" and suggests that they are missing the point. "Satire is an IQ test," he adds.

Though LeFevre and many hungry would-be financiers can cite movies like *The Wolf of Wall Street* for glamorizing the trade, the real reason Wall Street remains so appealing for so many might be something simpler. LeFevre concludes that the industry simply attracts a certain type of person. As he puts it, "I did have a felonious mentality, even before I went into banking," he says. **N**

REWIND

50
YEARS



AUGUST 30, 1965

RETIRED AIR FORCE MAJOR
GENERAL EDWARD LANSDALE, ON
THE ESCALATING WAR IN VIETNAM

“You
don’t win
guerrilla
wars by
bombing
and

napalming people and
then having all their
relatives and tribesmen
turn against you.”



WHO KNOWS THE OTTO MAN?



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